

JANUARY 18-24, 2016 NO.1188

# THE BIG ISSUE

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# WHEN JARVIS MET BOWIE



**A classic  
Big Issue interview**





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## Hello, my name is Josie.

I started selling The Big Issue three years ago. It lifted me and gave me a reason to do something positive with the day. My boyfriend also sells the magazine – it means we earn enough to rent a small flat together. I write poetry. I don't try to write the perfect poem, it's just therapeutic to try to capture your thoughts as best you can... Read more about my story on page 46.



## OUR MANIFESTO

● WE BELIEVE  
in a hand up,  
not a handout...

Which is why our sellers BUY every copy of the magazine from us for £1.25 and sell it on to you for £2.50. In this way we have helped hundreds of thousands of people to take control of their lives since 1991, and in the process created a global blueprint for social change.

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Which is why Big Issue Invest offers backing and investments between £50,000–£1.75m to social enterprises, charities and businesses which deliver social value to communities.



# CORRESPONDENCE

## Arresting story

I've just read Russell Monk's article in The Big Issue. This is the sort of thing I try to explain to people who see Big Issue sellers and homeless people as scroungers, and think they ought to get a "proper job". It seems to me that positions in power should not be taken by those that seek power but those, like Russell, who have an understanding born of experience.

*Ian Stewart, email*

Great article and great insight. In fact, spot on. Ex-police myself and know the thoughts you expressed. Glad to read you're now homed somewhere.

*H Davidson Crowe, Facebook*

Fantastically written article. Most illuminating, and challenging a lot of widely held stereotypes. Echoing other readers' comments, I hope things are improving for you.

I've had my own fall from grace, as a former investment banker who went homeless, with bipolar disorder, amongst other issues. I, too, was completely shocked by the lack of safety net, the lack of state support. I hope things change for the better soon.

*Nick Grant, Facebook*

Awesome article. We cannot punish the homeless for the situation they are in, it's not a lifestyle choice, as people might think, but arises from desperation. Very interesting that you became bipolar through your police work.

That happened to my father too, in the late '60s, but they didn't know what it was then. The difference for him was, though he left us, he had good family support from his brothers and sisters so didn't end up homeless. But he would have done for sure.

*Babs White, Facebook*

## Celebrating vendors

A big thank you to the lovely Big Issue vendor outside the King's Road Chelsea Starbucks today. He saw me struggling with my buggy and was the only person who offered to help me.

*Maria, London*

Write to: The Big Issue, Second Floor, 43 Bath St, Glasgow, G2 1HW

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## COMMENT OF THE WEEK

### Russell Monk is providing a public service

Thank you Russell Monk [ex-policeman who became homeless, January 4-10] for putting across your informed perspective on the plight of the homeless: I shake your hand and those of you that understand. I have read every word of this excellent and erudite article, and I applaud you for writing it. I am responding because my son is a serving police officer and I too spent my last six years in our local HQ 'correcting' and linking data inputted by officers. As a 'privileged' retired architect I was dumbfounded by the workings of our society, and being party to each incident/crime that I worked on I became very aware of the amount of officers' time that is wasted because of our own inability to either cope with our personal predicament or being unwilling to assist with others and end up in conflict with them. There were times indeed that I despaired at the way the public treated officers just because they were doing their duty.

I will always applaud the manner in which both officers and civilians respect the needs of the public, often to the detriment of their own lives and the lives of their families. Respect for one another is the biggest contributory factor missing, and it needs to be addressed from childhood.

*Roger Mant, Facebook*

## Labouring

Brendan O'Neill's article on the attitudes within the Labour Party to Jeremy Corbyn were a fair summing up of the situation [January 11-17]. He did miss one point: MPs represent their constituents; all of them, not just the ones who voted for them. They are NOT delegates of their party. It would be ridiculous to expect MPs to go back on their party manifesto or any personal statements within a few months. Between their election and that of Corbyn, there has been little change in the international or economic environment to cause them to consider changing their views.

I want to see some policies from Labour. I want to know how they'd legislate against companies that make big profits from trading in the UK but pay little tax here. I remain a critic of Conservative Party policy and some of the decisions the government has made. But they were elected by a system supported by all major parties that have held power for generations.

*John Rufford, Bethnal Green*

## @GeoffWilkinson

Reading @BigIssue interview with Stan Lee suggesting a Star Wars / Marvel spin off is possible

## Best foot forward

I have just posted info on Facebook and tweeted, following reading in The Big Issue [January 4-10] about third-generation Clarks shoes family member Lancelot starting up an ethical shoe-trading business in Ethiopia.

Next, the article about the former police officer who ended up on the streets was shocking – not something the general public would associate with homelessness. Finally, last week [New Year issue] I was heartened to read about the work of Canon Andrew White, the 'Vicar of Baghdad' who suffers with multiple sclerosis. An inspiration to us all.

Thank you for keeping us informed and reminding us of the need to be compassionate at all times. "There but for the grace of God go I" etc.

*Jennie Cummings-Knight, email*



## STARMAN

@Smithyshare

An artist, an innovator, a pioneer too. Inspiring us all. My cheery @BigIssue seller learnt his nifty moves from #DavidBowie, Let's dance



# OCKHAM'S RAZOR

A photograph of a theatrical aerial performance. Two performers are suspended in the air, one above the other, in a dark, industrial-looking space. Below them, three other performers are on the ground, supporting the structure. The scene is lit with dramatic, low-key lighting, creating a sense of height and tension.

**'PHYSICALLY THRILLING'**

SUNDAY TIMES

**'DARING AERIAL THEATRE'**

INDEPENDENT

**'SUPERB CIRCUS SKILLS'**

GUARDIAN

## TIPPING POINT

Poles are balanced on fingertips, hung from the roof, lashed, climbed, swung from and walked along, they become forests, cross roads and pendulums. The performers balance, climb and cling to this teetering world, as they wrestle with the moment when things begin to shift...

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# THE EDITOR

## Stop sitting on the fence



**T**he market in security fences is booming. Keeping people out is a real growth industry. There was a trade fair last week in Nuremberg for them. Make your own historically appropriate witty asides.

According to one report, the biggest recent such fence was 1000km long and was planted on the border between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Iran. That's a lot of wire and quite a lot of threat.

Some fencing industry executives are rubbing their hands at the thought of Donald Trump getting elected in the US. That promised fence between America and Mexico – fence nirvana! Get it right and it'll be visible from space.

This is a very confusing time.

On the one hand we want big fences to keep people out, on the other we're delighted about the Hatton Garden gang and details around their heist. They're like the Lavender Hill Mob. Just old geezers, falling asleep in big white Mercs when they're supposed to be on lookout duty, meeting in pubs, swapping nicknames and taking their cues from a mysterious fixer called Basil.

Some old rogues are all right. But if you don't look like you were in *The Sweeney*, this place isn't for you. And neither is that place. Or indeed any place.

Thomas Hobbes, the less-than-popular political philosopher, believed that society works on a level of fear. We allow the government, the state, the great leviathan, to impose rules and we abide by them because it's the best offer we're getting.

We enter into a compact that says we follow their rules so long as they protect us. Their rules, annoying as they are, are in our interests.

If you follow this through, it means that if we no longer trust the leviathan to look after us, we have no reason to follow its rules.

You could argue that we haven't had trust in the big instruments of state and church for some years. But still, we haven't had total anarchy. So there is something else that prevents us from breaking the ties.

At core, many people have an innate desire to do the right thing, especially to those who aren't so able to help themselves.

We've said before that The Big Issue exists because good people want to help less fortunate people work their way back to society. We're also seeing a surge around our Fill 'Em Up campaign, which is about readers swapping ideas and advice to allow others to rebuild their communities and help things grow.

This is where things must grow. It's not woolly, hands-around-the-campfire thinking. It deals with hard realities. It opens up, it doesn't build fences.

Good fences don't necessarily make good neighbours. There is another way.

Illustration: Lauren Crow / SWNS

## OFF THE GRID...



## VENDOR JACK SETS A DATE FOR THE BIG WEDDING

THEY MET WHILE HE WAS LIVING ON THE STREETS. ONE PROPOSAL AND COUNTLESS ACTS OF KINDNESS LATER, THEY'RE GETTING READY FOR THEIR DREAM DAY

Big Issue vendor Jack Richardson and his fiancée Toni Osborne, who made headlines around the globe with their engagement, have set a date for their wedding after locals and businesses rallied round to help.

The couple met in 2013 while Jack was sleeping rough in Bristol and lent Toni money to pay for electricity. They got engaged just before Christmas, hitting headlines from the BBC all the way to *Australian Women's Weekly*.

Locals and businesses offered to help make it a dream wedding, and last week Jack and Toni named the day – they will tie the knot at St Paul's Church in Clifton on March 19, with a wedding reception at nearby Bundy's bar. "I can't describe how amazing people have been," Jack, 37, told *The Big Issue* from his Park Street pitch.

"Avery's Wine Merchants are supplying wine and champagne, we've had photographers and videographers, two hairdressers – Hobbs and Top Six Hairdressing – all offering their services. People have been ringing up Bundy's and putting their own money behind the bar for the reception. It's unbelievable.

"An amazing person has even donated money for Toni to get a wedding dress. Then there's a guy I know, from the pub down the road, who is my size and has a box of Armani suits. He's very kindly offered to bring a few in for me to try and let me borrow one.

"Originally we were just going to go to the registry office and do it for as cheap as possible. That was the plan until my friend Dan, a vicar at the wonderful Pip n Jay Church in Bristol, offered to do the service for free.

"It really has turned into a fairytale that we could never have imagined. It's like the universe has bent over backwards to make this happen, to help give Toni the wedding that she deserves. We would love if all my customers, and everyone who has helped in even the slightest way, could come and celebrate our big day – 1.30pm at St Paul's Church. It really would mean the world to us."



## FROM THE VAULT... JANUARY 2006 NO 420

Radiohead singer Thom Yorke talks to us about the hotly anticipated follow-up to *Kid A* and how success didn't make him happy. "I thought it'd be all fluffy white clouds," he says. We also look at John Simm in *Human Traffic* and a new wave of 'drug movies'.



Illustration: Mitch Blunt

SIMON BARNETT

## How to chill out with a winter walk

**W**hen the temperature drops and winter finally arrives, what do you think about doing? For many it's curling up by the fire but for me it's all about walking.

Why winter? I have many reasons, and I'm sure if you step out this month you'll agree.

Winter scenery is incredible. Whether it's a blanket of snow covering the hills or a sprinkling of frost amongst the trees, winter provides a whole new perspective on our landscapes.

The best time to go for a winter walk is under clear skies when you'll be able to see for miles, something you can't do when flora is in full bloom. Take your camera, you're guaranteed to get some fantastic photos.

Contrary to popular belief, there's plenty of wildlife to spot. Look out for deer, badgers, otters, winter wildfowl and

roosting birds. Winter brings with it a unique advantage of being able to find clear animal tracks, without plants hiding the ground. And if there's snow or mud, even better!

But it's not just about the sheer enjoyment. Walking gets you out of doors at a time of year when our bodies are most deprived of sunlight. Even just half an hour in the fresh air can make a big difference in helping fight off the winter blues. Not to mention the fact that it's great exercise too. Don't be put off by the thought of having to invest in full-on mountaineering gear to go for a winter walk. That simply isn't the case. By choosing the right route and wearing a pair of sturdy, waterproof shoes and jacket, you can enjoy an incredible winter walk.

Take warm clothes and wear a hat and gloves. Several thin

layers are better than one thick layer. Pack a flask and high-energy snacks so you can enjoy a warming drink and refuel along the way.

If it's time for reflection you're looking for then winter walking is perfect. Our paths tend to be quieter at this time of the year. Pick your spot carefully and you could even be the first person to leave tracks in the snow.

And if that's not enough to persuade you, then maybe this is. There's nothing like reaching the pub at the end of your walk and having the chance to warm your feet by the fire while you enjoy your tipples, knowing that you well and truly deserve it.

Simon Barnett is director of walking development at Ramblers, a walking charity. Visit [ramblers.org.uk](http://ramblers.org.uk) for walking advice and inspiration

## FUND WALKING FOOTBALL

IT COULD BE A GAME CHANGER FOR OVER-45s, SAYS COLIN MACKAY, RETIRED SPORTS COACH

Reaching a certain age shouldn't mean being less active but there are health conditions and potential injuries to consider. I love the beautiful game but don't have the fitness levels I used to, so walking football seemed a perfect solution. Yet, in Scotland at least, there are limited opportunities to take part.

Edinburgh Leisure now offers sessions as part of Active Lives, which encourages people to be more active. It's aimed at those living in disadvantaged postcodes but there's wider demand.

The rules of walking football are similar to its speedier relation. But the differences are: the squads are smaller (between five and seven-a-side), free kicks are indirect, kick-ins replace throws, there are no offsides, the ball must be kept below head height and, of course, anything so much as a jog is prohibited.

Despite its name, the game is no walk in the park. It provides a physical and mental workout, despite the challenge not to run.



It means fewer injuries, too; something I can't risk at my age.

Participants can meet new people and avoid becoming isolated. It would be great to see the demand met, so older people can benefit from both the health and the social rewards.

[edinburghleisure.co.uk](http://edinburghleisure.co.uk)

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# HIDDEN BRITAIN

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No.58

## Clogau Gold Mine

SNOWDONIA, WALES

The Clogau mines were originally focused on copper but after gold began being extracted in 1854, a major seam was discovered – triggering a mini gold rush in Dolgellau. The Clogau mine was by far the most productive. Between 1862 and 1911 (main image is from the early 1900s; inset: how the mine entrance looks now) it produced 165,000 tonnes of ore, yielding more than 2,400kg of gold.

Thanks to its relative rarity, the rose-coloured gold is among the most expensive in the world. Welsh gold has been used for wedding rings for the Royal Family since 1923. The tradition was instigated by The Queen Mother on her



marriage to the Duke of York in that year. Queen Elizabeth's wedding ring is made from a nugget from the Clogau mine. Others to have Welsh gold wedding rings are Princess Anne (1973), Diana, Princess

of Wales (1981), Camilla, The Duchess of Cornwall (2005) and Prince Charles for both of his marriages. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge continued the tradition on their marriage in April 2011.

Gold mining began again between 1992 and 1998. This came to a halt because of the high cost of extraction, although a recent study has suggested there may still be viable quantities in the mine.

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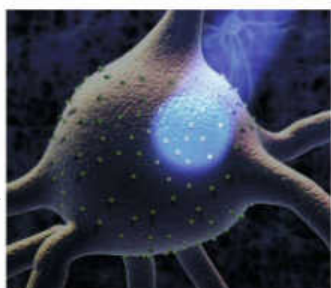


Photo: Alamy

**FORWARD THINKING... Lighting up depression.** Dutch neuroscientist Christian Keysers is working with the new biotechnology of optogenetics – the dynamic interaction between light and brain activity – using light to trigger emotions in the brain. He believes it could be used to treat depression or, more sinisterly, wipe out or implant memories, *Total Recall*-style. “Being able to record and manipulate brain activity will serve as an interface through which computers can become part of our brain.”

MY  
PECCADILLO



JING LUSI  
LUCKY MAN  
ACTRESS

DOG PSYCHOLOGY

I'm an amateur dog whisperer. After staying with a friend, I fell in love with their dog. I had depression and this dog made me feel like the best thing ever. I needed a reason to get up and out every day. So I decided to get a dog.

I did mountains of research into dog psychology. I read everything by dog behaviourists Cesar Millan and Victoria Stilwell. I built up a huge understanding of dog behaviour theories.

Some owners treat their dogs like children. But dogs have a pack mentality – they need a status, they need hierarchy. Never let the dog walk through a door before you, don't feed the dog before humans. If you put their needs above yours, it messes with their heads and they become disruptive.

I got a Maltese crossed with a poodle, a Maltipoo called Nori (below). When I was down,



the greeting of pure love felt better than any anti-depressant.

Animals break ice, start conversations. And when you are in a dark place, these interactions go a long way. Now I plan to register Nori with Pets as Therapy, where children with learning difficulties and people in hospices interact with dogs. Nori lights up people's lives just by walking past them.

Stan Lee's *Lucky Man* airs Fridays at 9pm on Sky1. For more information on Pets as Therapy, visit [petsastherapy.org](http://petsastherapy.org)





**“My white girlfriend and I would walk hand in hand. If someone stared, we kissed – without realising it could get us killed.”**

# Clarke Peters

*The Wire's Lester Freamon is a free spirit*



# LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

**W**here I grew up there was an Irish, Hispanic and Italian family. It was all mixed. There was a liberal and accommodating vibe in Englewood, New Jersey. It was deep. Our parents went to the board of education and forced them to integrate our schools, which was unheard of. The community said: "This is bullshit, we all dig each other."

**We had gangs and we'd change sides each week.** The kids knew each other's parents and looked out for each other; we played stickball, jump rope or hide-and-seek until all hours. That is what halcyon days are like. The summer seemed to go on and on. There was a freedom kids don't have today.

**I was at school with John Travolta and the Isley Brothers' Ernie and Marvin.** We were in a town of celebrities. Ben E King lived round the corner, Dizzy Gillespie up the hill. Coming from that environment, you realise you are no different from anybody else. You see Dizzy in the A&P [grocery] store and the next night he's at Carnegie Hall. That is what cats were doing around our block. We loved them for it but played it cool.

**We did all the marching and protesting.** I was too young to articulate my political views but my brother was part of Snick [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] and Core [Congress of Racial Equality]. They were student activist groups that went to the South to campaign for voter rights. He brought a political consciousness to the house that opened my eyes.

**I was arrested protesting against Vietnam.** It was a waste of time, life and money. I thought it was a stupid thing we were doing in Vietnam and I think it is a stupid thing we are doing now in the Middle East. That doesn't make me a bad American.

**I had a white girlfriend and we'd walk hand in hand, knowing people would get upset.** If someone stared too long, we started kissing – without realising this kind of shit could get us killed. But we felt so passionately. This was the year Martin [Luther King] was killed. Your hormones are driving you nuts at that age anyway but there was a sense of being on a mission, knowing that what we were doing was, to some people's minds, taboo and that this shit had to change.

**I don't feel safe walking or driving in the States.** I know in somebody's mind I'm the enemy. People say: "Yes, but you have a black president." But have you seen anyone co-operate with him? No. I'd tell my younger self to be careful – there are dangerous people around. Strangely enough, they're still around today.

**When I was 13, my mother said to me: "You are not my child."** Woah! So my older brother, who says I was found in a gutter, is right? No. My mother was laying the foundation for my spiritual awareness. Our children come through us. Nurture them, see what their propensities are and help them on their way. As a parent, I try to do that.

**My mother took me to a burlesque show.** I thought, woah, my mother is the best woman in the world, look at these naked ladies. They were

shaking, doing splits. Then she told me there was only one woman on the stage. She asked again: Did I really want to do theatre? Yes! There is all manner of life in theatre. If some cat is dressing up like a girl and convincing me, they are a better fucking actor than I am.

**My younger self would have been surprised that I wrote a musical and would have loved *Five Guys Named Moe*.** But he already knew he was going to play Othello. I've done it twice, the second time with Dominic West [McNulty in *The Wire*]. That was fun. He is a bad influence, in the best possible way.

**I knew I wanted to be in London for theatre but had no idea how I'd get there.** Then, in 1973, I signed a contract with Essex Music as a singing songwriter. We formed a group called The Majestics and played with Shirley Bassey. In fact, who didn't we play with?

**My younger self would say: "Wow, you met Ned Sherrin?"** When *That Was the Week That Was* came to America, it was so controversial and satirical. It shaped my political point of view, in a cynical kind of way. Ned was my mentor. I wish he was still here. I miss him enormously, a good cat.

**I would tell my younger self that not every smiling face is a nice person.** Be more discerning. By nature I am trusting but there are people who mistake your trust for weakness. They mistake your patience for fear. I ain't that guy.

***The Wire* shows the evil mindset of the one per cent who run everything.** I'm so glad I was a voice in that chorus, holding up a mirror, showing that not all drug addicts are criminals. More are victims. The criminals are those that take industry out of cities or close collieries and throw drugs into the towns to anaesthetise people left behind.

**I didn't know what fame was until I began to feel like a commodity.** Celebrity was never part of my plan. I avoided being pigeon-holed, and had done dramatic, comedic and musicals. So to go into casting meetings after *The Wire*, and realise, "oh, you don't want me to act, you want Lester Freamon"... Sorry. I didn't come into this business to be put into a niche.

**Sometimes we have to prostitute ourselves.** I have a son at college and don't want him coming out with a massive debt. Why would you do that to a child? Give kids a fucking break. I'm now working my arse off so he doesn't have to go through that.

**I had a son who passed away in my arms.** My mother's words helped me – the seeds of that grew into an understanding of the transience of life and laid the foundation for my spiritual journey. Something from my youth carried me through.

**I'd tell my younger self to find that spiritual quest you want to go on and do it.** Go deeper sooner. That has been part of my life since 1986. I would have told myself to believe the coincidences in your life are not coincidences, believe you have abilities beyond what you think, believe telepathy exists and that premonitions are a part of your life. Believe your thoughts and prayers have an effect somewhere down the line.

Clockwise from top: as Cider Jones in *Silver Dream Racer*, 1980; Lester Freamon in *The Wire*; a performance of *Five Guys Named Moe*, the musical written by Peters



*Jericho* airs Thursdays at 9pm on ITV.  
Interview by Adrian Lobb @adey70

**IN 1968, THE YEAR CLARKE PETERS TURNS 16...** Enoch Powell delivers his Rivers of Blood speech / Pope Paul VI bans the use of contraceptives by Roman Catholics

# THE BIG LONDON NIGHT WALK

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SCAN  
TO  
ACT



## Style over substance – the power of imagery runs deep



I completely and utterly missed out on David Bowie, registering with me only because of his flirtation with Nazism, followed by a conversion to Brecht and tough stuff from the 1920s. I was told by a Bowie devotee that it was all style and one should not take his politics too seriously.

French artist in the Second World War Jean Cocteau likewise made only fashion statements, or artistic statements you might say, when he at times dressed up as a Nazi officer. This tastelessly was not at the time of the 'Liberation', where he might have found his head torn from his shoulders by an angry crowd, but in the middle of the German occupation. It seems if you've got the right fashion and creative impulses they can separate you from the rest of us who are not allowed the indulgences of wearing uniforms of mass murderers.

Fashion and pop reached many heights with the Sex Pistols but even though I was an ancient 29-year-old at the time, I loved their bitterness and outrageous contempt for what seemed to me the po-faced pop stars who seemed so serious about their throwaway, ephemeral talents.

I supposed I always like the tinny and trashy so long as it saw itself as tinny and trashy. That was one exciting part about the arrival of the built-in obsolescence of capitalism: it was always making stuff that as soon as you got it you knew it was your duty to throw it away. It was anarchic hedonism, destructive and to some extent antisocial.

But even that particular revolt against 'sameness' becomes in the end its own form of sameness.

Elvis does Las Vegas and loses his affront to the status quo. Fashion and style lose their screaming-in-your-face shout. We all have to get used to the next affront to our sensibilities until they become a part of some hall of fame.

I suppose the greatest fashion statement I ever got involved in, without realising it was a worldwide style thing, was Marxism. We were a pretty small outburst of fashion, numbering only thousands at its height in the UK. But I had gone to Paris to the very nerve-centre of style as revolution and revolution as style to sign up. There I was on a mass mobilisation of people using Marx as the unifying imagery of revolt.

Later I learned a few hard lessons about style and fashion, and realising that it was

much deeper and realer in fact than it presented. To describe politics as a fashion is to miss how central fashion and style is to the essence of our lives. How come all Oxbridge professors to some extent look the same?

How come all off-duty coppers, with the exception of those that are deep spies, look like off-duty police officers? How come we all measure ourselves by an inner-style index, and ask: "Does it do it for us?"

Style and fashion may sound like a dismissing and trivialising of phenomena by calling it this but that is missing the point.

Style and form and fashion play a major role in drawing us into more serious things. And I'm not just talking Geldof and Band Aid.

By becoming a Marxist I was making a fashion statement, wishing to move on from the current Hippyism that The Beatles and the Stones of '67 had seemed to slip into, and by that receiving my spleen.

Dylan goes electric at Newport Folk Festival in 1965 and you'd have thought he had put on a Nazi uniform! Style moves on, and positioning of a deeper kind moves on.

As I said, David Bowie passed me by but he must have had an incredible effect on the many. Though one newspaper journalist

was bemused that Bowie's coverage would outstrip even the highest Nobel Prize-winner or true great figure.

But Bowie, in spite of my ignorance of him, was a big puncher in the popular world. Alas, until the Nobel Prize-winners get better PR and better tunes, they may remain in the remoter areas of the popular conscience.

A new world order awaits the one that can be both.



The Sex Pistols turned punk into an art form

**"Until the Nobel Prize-winners get better PR and tunes, they may remain in remoter areas of popular conscience"**

John Bird is the founder and Editor in Chief of The Big Issue. @johnbirdswords  
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## Isis aren't radicalising girls. They're selling them a fantasy



I've been asked to perform my new show in Paris. I love the city. I have been there many times and had so much fun. But I am nervous this time. Comedy is all about timing. Is this the right time to do a comedy show about Isis in the city where they have just orchestrated such shocking terror attacks? What happened in Paris has changed things all over the world. I was worried about my safety and whether the audience would laugh. I know the show is funny but given what's happened in Paris, would that change everything?

The show is my take on why some young girls have chosen to go off to join Isis. It came about when I was in New York, staying with a friend I went to school with in Birmingham. We watched the news about girls from Bethnal Green who went to join Isis. Like them, my friend is Bangladeshi. And she was shocked. We both were. Why are they doing this?

Mine was a strict upbringing. We were never allowed out, we were never allowed to wear skirts, we weren't allowed to talk to boys. It was restrictive. I was meant to do my GCSEs and A-Levels, go to university, get a degree, come home, have an arranged marriage, have children, get a normal job. But I was always curious. I wanted to do something different.

We rebelled but in smaller ways. We went to nightclubs with gay men and took ecstasy. We danced all night in Birmingham. Isis weren't around when we were growing up. But we didn't go off to join the IRA or start helping Gaddafi out. So I started thinking what made them take such a drastic step. The first thing I realised is that it is nothing to do with religion or politics. My parents are very religious. I had to go to the mosque after school every day. But I didn't know the real meaning of my religion. And I certainly didn't know anything about politics.

These girls don't know anything about the essence of Islam or religion. This is not kids being radicalised. Loads of Muslim women I have spoken to think the same as me but you won't hear this in the news. The West want to think it is some religious or political reason. But it is very simple why

they are going: they are horny teenagers who fancy these guys and are rebelling. It is purely sexual, and it is a fantasy. These guys are hot, macho, hairy, with guns. They are the One Direction of Islam – sex symbols to these young girls.

If some gorgeous man had written to me and sent pictures and asked me to join him, it might have seemed like an exciting way out. But it is nothing to do with religion. All the Muslim girls and boys I have spoken to agree with me.

I'm a comedian. Everything I write or want to say has to in some way be funny. I've made jokes about 9/11, terrorism and



Mirza says we're thinking about Isis all wrong

**“These girls are horny teenagers. The terrorists are the One Direction of Islam”**

now Isis. Satire to me is part of being British. It is part of our culture, our history. We do it very well. I used to watch Dave Allen, *Fawlty Towers*, *Dad's Army*, *Blackadder*, *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, all of which were brilliant and different.

I have laughed at “Don't Mention The War” but at times like this, war needs to be mentioned everywhere. What would be most painful to these people – Isis, terrorists, extremists – is to ridicule and laugh at them. That will be more painful and crushing to their egos than hitting them with a bomb.

People are sick of politicians and self-appointed community leaders, who look the part in their beards and dresses. No one believes or wants to hear their drivel. What we all love is a bit of a laugh. Everything going on in the world now involves and affects everyone. It would be stupid to stay silent. The best thing is to joke about and laugh about it. This is how the Jews got through the dark times.

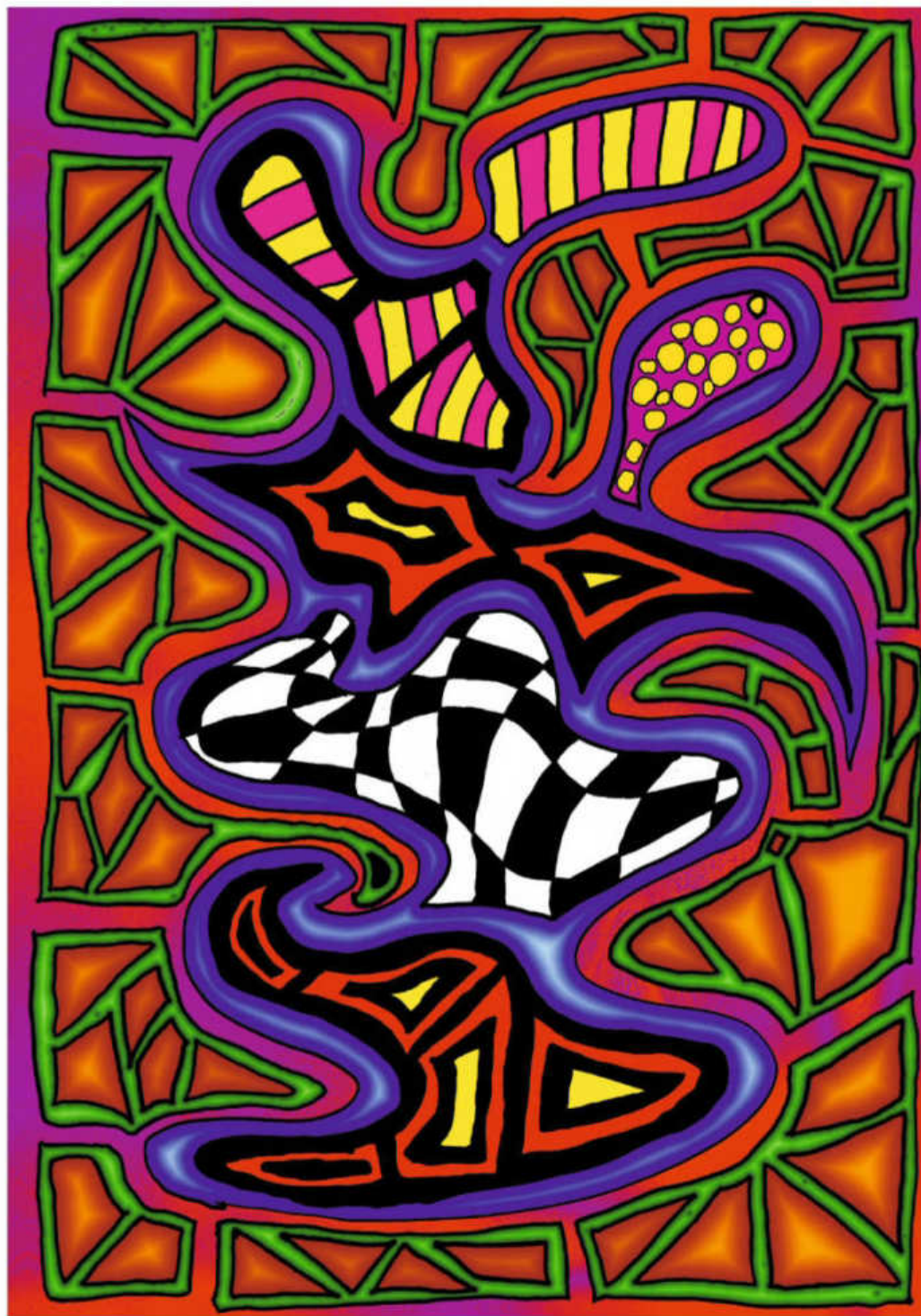
I am really fed up at having to represent, apologise and disassociate myself from the actions of deranged individuals who claim to share the same faith as me. Every time one of ‘my people’ blows something up, we have to issue a #hashtag to say we condemn them.

In December, that comedian Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi called for all Muslims to join him in that hell hole, which they advertise like a Club 18-30 holiday in Ibiza. He said: “We urgently call upon every Muslim to join the fight.” He's off his rocker. I tweeted him, saying: “Sorry mate but I've just had my nails done and I don't want them to snap in the Wild West. I'm also making pancakes tonight...”

I have performed in Kosovo, Pakistan, Lahore, Karachi. I went when it was pretty unstable. I like to go to places where they probably wouldn't see someone like me performing comedy. But Paris feels different. I have no idea how people will react.

Comedian Shazia Mirza's new show *The Kardashians Made Me Do It* tours from February 5. [shazia-mirza.com](http://shazia-mirza.com)

# STREET ART



## ◀ SNAKE HIPS

BY CHRIS GRAY

"I'm 48 years old and have a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia, which is largely under control by the correct medication," says Chris. "I grew up in Littlehampton and I've lived in Brighton for over 20 years. I've been using computers to create images, animations, interactive pieces and music since the early 1990s. These images are hand-drawn then treated and coloured in Photoshop." See more of Chris' work at: [chrisgrayartist.com](http://chrisgrayartist.com)

## FAR REMOVED

BY JH BIRD

Winter sunlight,  
Focuses the everyday shadows,  
Of London's chill pavements.  
Outside the machinery of,  
The working day,  
We glance up,  
At the line of bright shop  
windows,  
Prizes and trophies gleaming,  
Beyond reach,  
The street surge of,  
Buses, taxis and radio songs,  
Cannot quite drown out,  
The fragile birdsong,  
The momentary, fading calls.

A formerly homeless pensioner now living in secure housing, JH Bird describes himself as being "hopeful for a better future" and as "an optimist refusing to be defeated". With this poem, he appeals to everyone to "give a hand to vulnerable people".

## ▶ LUMBERING

BY ASSAD

Assad was born in Somalia in 1979 and moved to London in 1997. He works predominantly with clay, creating sculptures inspired by his dreams. "I'm doing what I see: a lion, the movement, the trees, the fight for life. I like working in three dimensions, my fingers love the clay, the squishiness. It's heavyweight, real."



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David Cameron's  
Housing Bill  
proposes to tear  
down the walls



ANALYSIS / ADAM FORREST

## Cameron and the 'grand plan' for sink estates

**D**avid Cameron has not had very much to say about housing since becoming Prime Minister. His government's Housing Bill, moving through parliament, proposes some radical things. Yet Cameron, gifted in the art of sounding utterly reasonable, never sounds remotely radical.

Last week, surprisingly, it all came tumbling out. Cameron suddenly found he had strong opinions about the state of Britain's "sink estates", with their "brutal high-rise towers and dark alleyways that are a gift to criminals and drug dealers". He talked giddily about demolition, about the land that could be "unlocked" by regeneration schemes. "I believe we can tear down anything that stands in our way... [and] rebuild houses that people feel they can have a real future in."

The language is jarringly retro, rhetoric borrowed from the early 1980s, when society's ills were blamed on concrete and the layout of local authority housing schemes. Cameron seems unaware many of the estates with the worst structural problems have already been knocked down. He seems unaware tens of billions of pounds were spent upgrading high-rise blocks – and all kinds of social housing – under New Labour's Decent Homes Programme: sums that dwarf the paltry £140m promised to help "blitz" 100 estates and allow private developers in to start again. The PM also seems unaware hundreds of thousands of post-war estate

residents are fed up having their mode of living lazily denigrated. Gentrification in central London means ex-council flats on post-war estates in the city (sold off under the Right to Buy) are now regularly bought and sold in excess of the average British house price (£208,000). Go to estate agent site [themodernhouse.net](http://themodernhouse.net) and you'll find well looked after, now fashionable ex-council properties in the capital going for anywhere between £450,000 and £550,000.

It's only because housing (of all types and styles) in the South East is so lucrative that private developers are keen to "regenerate" wherever they can find land. But they want people with money to buy or rent at market rates, so estates with concentrations of social housing tenants remain an inconvenience. Labour peer Lord Adonis has been a key influencer on No.10 policy. He has suggested some post-war estates are so ripe for redevelopment they should be considered "brown-field" (derelict). Astonishing, considering people still *live* there. "Islington council alone owns about 150 large council estates... situated on some of the most expensive land in the world," he wrote recently. Cameron says "regeneration will work best in areas where land values are high because new private homes built attractively... will fund the regeneration of the rest of the estate".

But that is not what is happening. The limitations of estate regeneration schemes – mostly partnerships between developers and housing associations – have been well documented, in this publication and in others. Tenure-type has shifted toward private sale,

private market rents and "affordable" rents (up to 80 per cent of market rates). Residents on estates earmarked for demolition have been forced to move further out of their city or pay more to stay in new, smaller, high-density flats in their neighbourhood (according to the Royal Institute of British Architects, new homes in Britain are the smallest in Europe).

### So what does the Housing Bill aim to do?

Primarily, the bill appears designed to speed up trends already under way. It includes measures to extend Right to Buy to housing association tenants, to force the sale of high-value council properties, to end lifetime tenancies and introduce "pay to stay" charges for tenants in council houses earning more than £30,000 per household a year (£40,000 in London).


There is nothing in the Housing Bill or in Cameron's announcements to suggest that the amount of social housing on estates will be protected. The vague pledge that every flogged-off council house will be replaced by two "affordable" ones is particularly brazen, given the one-for-one replacement promise heard in the 1980s following the Right to Buy was never remotely close to being fulfilled.

The attack on "sink estates" is confirmation the government believes private development is the only mechanism for change. Just how many people on low incomes will be able to afford Cameron's vision of "a real future" remains to be seen.

@adamtomforrest

JUSTICE SYSTEM

# WANT TO REFORM START WITH

A photograph of a prison interior. In the foreground, a person's arm with a tattoo is holding a baby. The baby is wearing a plaid dress and white socks. The background shows a prison corridor with metal bars and a chain-link fence. The lighting is bright, coming from overhead fixtures.

JUSTICE SECRETARY  
MICHAEL GOVE HAS  
RADICAL PLANS FOR  
PRISON REFORM. BEFORE  
GOING MUCH FURTHER  
HE MIGHT WANT TO  
LOOK NORTH TO THIS  
PIONEERING SCOTTISH  
PROJECT PRESENTING  
INMATES AND THEIR KIDS  
WITH A BETTER FUTURE.

**WORDS: DANI GARAVELLI**



# FORM PRISON? H THE KIDS

**I**n Low Moss Prison near Bishopbriggs, 10 miles outside Glasgow, half a dozen inmates are gathered round a table heaped with felt, glue and glitter. The scars that mark their faces hint at turbulent pasts but today they are absorbed in making sock puppets for their children. Clumsy hands are twisting pipe-cleaners into crooked smiles, and guttural voices are laying claim to the last pom-pom.

The men are all taking part in a radical programme, which aims to help prisoners become better fathers, reduce offending and build a better future. There's Chris, who has three sons he rarely sees from a previous relationship and wants to make a more enduring connection with his two toddlers. There's Alan, jailed for a serious assault, whose daughter Olivia, now two, has "settled [him] right down". And then there is Ronnie. In and out of care throughout his childhood, Ronnie had barely seen his sons, Calvin, two, and Rio, one, before coming to Low Moss but now is allowed one visit a month in the presence of a social worker – and the three of them are getting to know each other. "I've went through a lot of things in my life I don't want them to go through," Ronnie says. "I want to be there for them."

Low Moss is not your archetypal prison. From the outside, it is not dissimilar to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency building nearby (though with fewer windows). Inside the main block, its wide corridors and brightly painted signs give it the air of a higher education establishment.

Purpose-built four years ago, the 784-inmate jail, which holds all types of offenders, from those on remand to those serving life sentences, has fully embraced the Scottish Prison Service's current ethos – an open, humane approach with an emphasis on rehabilitation. Under chief executive Colin McConnell, that ethos includes encouraging prisoners to forge closer bonds with their children. Unless there is a history of domestic violence, it is in children's best interests to spend time with their fathers. This also helps reduce recidivism, with studies showing inmates who maintain family ties are 39 per cent less likely to reoffend. Traditionally, the way prisons function has militated against the survival of relationships. Harassed partners often struggle with dragging children on long journeys to stressful visits with dads who are rooted to their chairs. On top of that, many prisoners will have been abused or neglected by their own dads. With little positive experience to draw on, they are liable to make the same mistakes. But if jails could find a way to teach prisoners to nurture, and devise a system that >

Paul Millan was in Low Moss prison when his four-month-old daughter, Farah-Rose, was born



allowed them to do so, then the cycle of poor parenting might be broken, the children might be happier and fewer people might end up behind bars.

This is what Low Moss is trying to achieve. As well as its classroom-based course, the prison offers baby massage and interactive play sessions (all run by Early Years Scotland) and more relaxed children's visits where the men are allowed to move around. The children's visits feature a homework club so fathers can continue to play a role in their sons' and daughters' education. For the last few years Low Moss has also run a First Day at School event with new-starts invited to come in their uniforms and get their photos taken. Significantly, in Scotland, children's visits are not dependent on the good behaviour of prisoners, as they are in England and Wales, because the focus is on the welfare of the child. With this in mind, the prison is always looking for new ways to make the experience less intimidating. One pioneering move has been the setting up of a Scout and Guide club, which allows children and their parents to take part in activities on-site.

Low Moss is not the only prison in the UK to run parenting programmes – those south of the border are more classroom-based – but with its multi-pronged approach, Low Moss is blazing a trail. Its success has attracted international attention, with policy-makers from Ireland, Norway and even China coming to see it for themselves. Justice Secretary Michael Gove signalled a shift away from predecessor Chris Grayling's emphasis on punishment, towards reform and rehabilitation, during his speech at the Conservative Party Conference in October. Could it be that Low Moss is a lead that Gove will follow?

Family case management officer Duncan McGougan and family contact officer Jacqui Gilchrist are in an office packed with presents to be handed out to prisoners' children at Christmas parties. The wall above Gilchrist's desk is adorned with thank-you letters similar to those you see in maternity hospitals. Here they seem out of place until you realise McGougan and Gilchrist are also doing their utmost to ensure those who want to parent get to do so. They know if their work is to have an impact they have to start early and follow through. If a prisoner's partner goes into labour, they will arrange for him to be taken to the hospital so he can hold his baby minutes after the birth. If a prisoner's child is diagnosed with autism, they will ensure he gets the support he needs to understand and cope with the condition. Inmates do not need to be in a stable relationship with the mother of their children to take part or even to be certain of access once they are released (though they do have to clear child protection hurdles) and McGougan works intensively with a handful of men from the most troubled backgrounds.

On the day I visit, he is preparing to attend a core group meeting for a recently released prisoner in whom he has invested heavily. David and his partner Tracy\*, both former drug users, were in jail when their son was born, so he was placed in foster care. But Tracy regained custody on her release. Now David is out too. It is not clear if they will stay together but McGougan says David is still focused on giving his son a good life. Cases like



this sound tricky: however sincere David is, no one can be sure he will stay off drugs. Couldn't encouraging a relationship between the two build up unrealistic expectations? How can McGougan be sure men guilty of violent crimes (as several of those I meet are) won't prove a corrosive influence? McGougan admits this is a concern but says he is careful about whom he chooses. And, as Nancy Loucks, chief executive of the charity Families Outside, points out, a distinction has to be drawn between their offending and ability to parent.

In many ways, prison is the ideal setting for these men to focus on fatherhood. They may be sober for the

first time in years, they have the chance to reflect on past mistakes and there are no distractions. Danny, who is serving 11 years for attempted murder, is one prisoner who has reconnected with his

**"THIS PRISON IS GREAT FOR SHOWING YOU FAMILY IS KEY. I WILL COME OUT A DIFFERENT PERSON."**  
DANNY, SERVING 11 YEARS

family. He has a 16-year-old step-daughter and two sons, Cody, nine, and Clay, 19 months, who was born while he was inside. Not only has he been able to bond with Clay, but he is now mending his relationship with his own father after 15 years of estrangement. His partner Fiona tracked him down and McGougan organised for the pair to have a private visit so they could get reacquainted. Now Danny's father and his wife have teamed up with Fiona and the children and they are all spending Christmas together. "I will come out of here a different person," Danny says. "This prison





Jamie with his son Jamie Jr during a play session organised by Lynne Johnstone of Early Years Scotland

## GET THEM WHILE THEY'RE YOUNG

Low Moss is not the only prison in Scotland to focus on fatherhood. At Polmont Young Offenders Institution, governor Sue Brookes (pictured) has brought in two parenting officers to deliver programmes drawn up by Barnardo's Scotland. Some



sessions are available to all in the hope they will have an impact in future. Others are tailored to those who have or will soon have babies, and are linked to visits where they can gain hands-on experience. Because so many young offenders have had difficult backgrounds, the programmes encourage them to think about their own experiences and attitudes in order to give their babies the support they need. They are also taught about the risks of foetal alcohol syndrome and how to respond if their children are bullied.

Conscious that inmates – many of whom have problems with alcohol or ADHD – find it hard to sit still, the parenting officers engage them in interactive exercises. One involves getting someone to draw round them when they're lying down. On the outside of the outline, they write messages about the kind of dad they want to be. And on the inside, they write the things their own dads said to them. "When you see that up on the wall – the stark difference between the two – it's enough to make you weep," says Brookes. She believes it's important to concentrate on parenting skills at Polmont – which holds 16 to 23-year-olds – because they can catch young men before negative patterns become entrenched. Eventually, she hopes the mothers will be able to attend some of the sessions alongside their partners.

is great for showing you family is the key. I won't take mine for granted."

On the classroom-based course, the prisoners reflect on their own childhood experiences. Sometimes this will prove traumatic and they will be referred for counselling. But they are also taught about the way their children's brains develop, and are encouraged to sing, read and play. The benefits are clear when I am invited to sit in on the sessions. Involving a handful of prisoners at a time, these take place in the visits room, which – with its play area full of toys – could pass for a village hall. Only when you look out of the far window to the coils of barbed wire are you conscious this is a place of incarceration. At the baby massage class, Paul Millan is rubbing oil into four-month-old Farah-Rose's legs. He too has been convicted of attempted murder but he is very gentle with his daughter. "Are you telling me stories?" he croons. Paul was in prison when Farah-Rose was born but the sessions have allowed him to learn to do all the things he'd have done on the outside – change her nappy, give her a bottle – and to become an integral part of her life, so he won't return home a stranger.

The same is true of Sean Scally, jailed when his daughter Sienna-Rose, now seven months, was 10 days old. "She would never come to me before," says Sean. "But every time she sees me now, she smiles."

At the play session, the challenges of maintaining relationships become apparent. Chris is one of those who arrives expectantly with his sock puppets but his children have not turned up and he returns to his wing. No matter how hard the prison works, there are logistical problems that conspire to keep families apart.

For the prisoners who *are* able to join in, it is a positive experience, with even the most diffident singing and making a toy fish swim in a blue lycra "sea". Jamie's partner Victoria admits they both had difficult upbringings. When Jamie Jr was born seven months ago, he had reflux and they found it difficult to cope with his crying and Victoria's other three children. Jamie snr left the family home. Then, two weeks after he returned, he was arrested. "I agree if you haven't been shown how to be a parent, you don't know how to do it," Victoria says. She thinks the sessions help, and Jamie does appear to be engaging with his baby. Will this make the prisoners less likely to reoffend? They believe so. "I've already missed too many days of my daughter's life," Sean says. "I will not be here again," agrees Paul.

At one point, I watch as Ronnie paints a picture with Calvin and Rio. As with most toddlers, there is more paint on their hands than on the paper, so Ronnie wipes them carefully before getting down on the mat to play. It's early days but the social worker seems impressed.

The next time I look up, Calvin has run to the far end of the room and Ronnie is chasing him. They return together, Ronnie following Calvin as he pushes a toy buggy with a doll. Low Moss' approach to fatherhood is resource-intensive. There are no guarantees. The men's best intentions may melt when exposed to the real world with its myriad temptations. But there – in one snapshot – is what it offers: a glimmer of hope that the ability to nurture will be passed to future generations and prevent more young lives being broken. **TBI**

\* Names changed to protect their identity

# 'I CAN'T THINK OF A TIME THAT I DIDN'T THINK ABOUT DEATH'

**L**ast week David Bowie died and the world mourned the loss of one of the creative giants of our time. Just 69, he had kept his terminal liver cancer private for 18 months.

In recent years, Bowie rarely gave interviews. But back in 1997 he spoke to *The Big Issue*. The interview marks a unique and extraordinary confluence of talents: Damien Hirst, as our guest editor, decided to chase an interview with Bowie so he commissioned his friend Jarvis Cocker to carry it out. Hirst wanted them to discuss a specific subject – smoking. It led to a remarkably intimate philosophical reflection on the power of addiction, the futility of reaching for another high, and of family and the meaning of life – and death. It reinforces why Bowie will be so missed.

**Jarvis Cocker:** I asked Damien why he wanted me to talk to you about smoking, and it seemed to be that you'd given up every other vice in your life but you hadn't given up smoking and he wondered why that was.

**David Bowie:** Oh, I see. Well I think I still do a lot of drugs, you know: caffeine and smoking, and I'm probably addicted to television and certain kinds of newspapers and art. Addiction comes in all sorts of forms but the ones that were physically damaging, not so much to me but to the people around me, they had to go, firstly. Then there's cigarettes. Once Iman and I start having children, I think they will have to go too. Do you really stand by the idea of living for a long time or do you instead want to fill a shorter life with maybe more interesting things? One makes a compromise between the two, actually.

**JC:** I remember when I was growing up and my mother smoked and she used to say to me: "Go to the corner shop and buy me some cigs."

**DB:** Yeah, I had exactly the same.

**JC:** And I used to say: "You know mum, you're killing yourself." I really was against it, so it's quite ironic that I've ended up smoking.

**DB:** Mine was a house of smokers as well, both parents smoked a considerable number of cigarettes. I think it was Senior Service and then when my father had a better job it became Weights. And I'd steal his. I think it was the rite of passage through to adulthood that appealed to me, that was the thing about it. Are you smoking at the moment, by the way?

**JC:** No but I've got a packet just in case I feel the urge.

**DB:** Well, I've got one on so...

**JC:** Okay, I'll join you then.

**DB:** When you're a kid it's really a kind of perverse need to try something that's risky because it's frowned

upon by older people. Also because you know it's inherently bad for you.

**JC:** So, when you wake up in the morning, are you one of these people that reaches straight for the bedside table and lights up or do you try to stave it off for as long as possible?

**DB:** I'll stave it off until breakfast. At the end of breakfast when I'm having a cup of coffee I'll have a cigarette. So it's from pretty early on in the morning. In a general day I get through about 40 Marlboro Lights, which is a cut-down from what I used to smoke, believe me. When I'm on the road I tend to drop down to about 20.

**JC:** I was going to ask you that – do they affect your voice?

**DB:** I think probably that I'd sing much better if I didn't smoke. I'm sure of that actually. I've lost loads of notes from the top register with the years of smoking but then someone suggested that smoking will often help people presume that they could be greater if they didn't smoke. Which I kinda like – "well you know if I didn't smoke, of course I could get those top Cs".

**JC:** I'll quote some lyrics to you. "Time takes a cigarette, puts it in your mouth" – am I getting this right? – "You pull on your finger and then a cigarette."

**DB:** That was a sort of plagiarised line from Baudelaire which was something to the effect of life is a cigarette, smoke it in a hurry or savour it.

**JC:** I've heard Damien say that every time he has a cigarette he thinks about death. Do you go along with that?

**DB:** I can't think of a time that I didn't think about death. There again, I've been smoking all my life so it's hard to not equate the two together. You know, I'm fairly easygoing about the length of life in a way – it'll sort of happen when it happens. It sounds good anyway. But will Damien still smoke around his child?

**JC:** Eh, I don't know actually. I'll have to ask.

**DB:** That's an interesting thing because that's the area that worries me. That's the area where I get a little righteous and moral about it because, over the past at least 10 or 15 years, it's really come home to me what impact one's own vices can have on other people, and that really determines how I mistreat my own body. I try not to smoke around Iman that much but I'm not very good at that.

**JC:** Have you read *Cigarettes Are Sublime*? I've got a few quotes here: "They are sublime because they involve a confrontation with mortality."

**DB:** Ah, that's the thinking-of-death-as-you-smoke number.

**JC:** Mmm, that's it, isn't it? What about this one >







# HATS ON FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE



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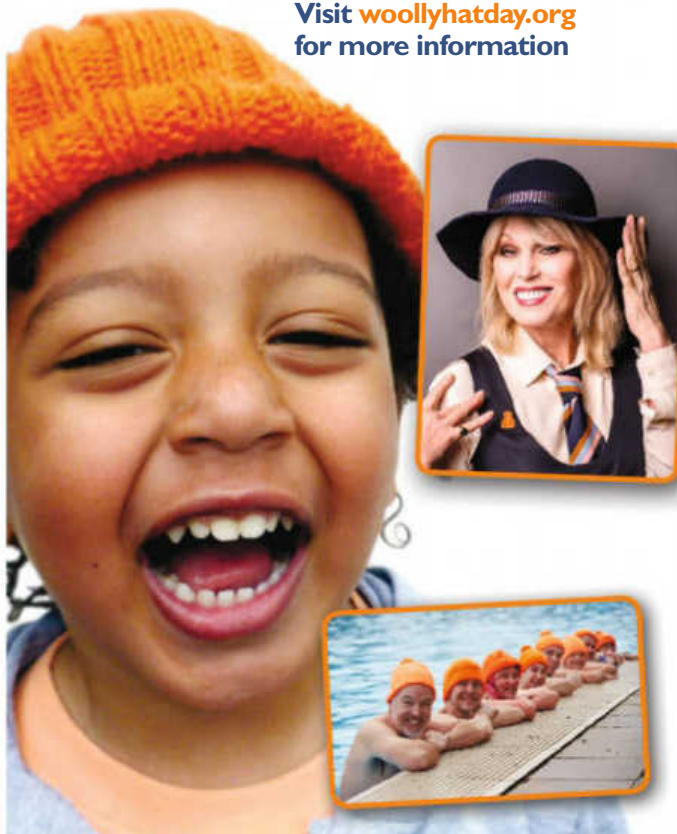
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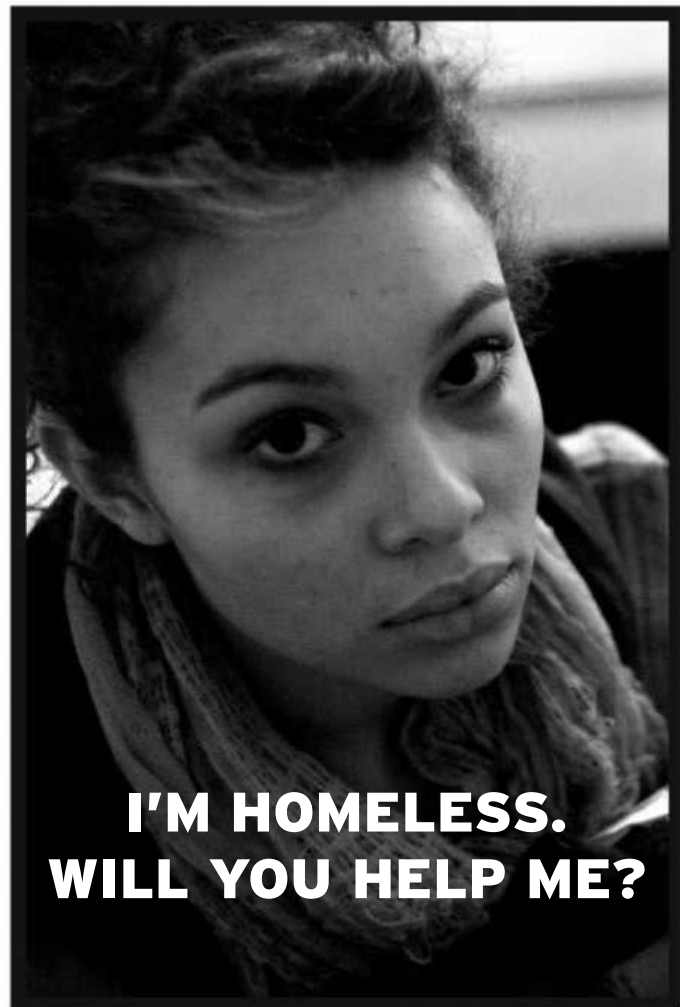
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– Oscar Wilde: “A cigarette is the perfect type of the perfect pleasure. It is exquisite and it leaves one unsatisfied, what more can one want? Each cigarette is an absolute failure, never providing the imagined fulfilment.”

**DB:** But I think you can apply that to nearly any of life’s pleasures. They all leave you unsatisfied because you try to reach that high every time. You always have to go back.

**JC:** You have to keep trying.

**DB:** You have to keep trying. You keep going for it. Not just to get the high but you’re hoping in desperation that one day the high that you do achieve will stay with you. But of course it never does, so in its own way it’s an avenue to insanity. It produces a rat syndrome, you know, where you just go round and round and round. Circularity.

**JC:** No one can ever accept the fact that life consists of a series of highlights and you can never really keep those highlights going.

**DB:** It’s plate-spinning.

**JC:** That’s the thing that makes them a pleasure.

**DB:** It’s wise not to get too euphoric or too melancholic. A balance in-between for me has always given me a much wider and easier passage through life. I find it’s such a disillusionment to get incredibly excited and happy about things, and that will not maintain. Also it’s quite psychotic to become like that. I mean it’s really depressed schizophrenia, when you go from those incredible heights to lows. I’ve done all of those and it really serves one badly.

**JC:** It’s like the Prozac argument, that the drug will level people out so they will never feel things very extremely at all.

**DB:** Right but the other side of that is that it also reduces your ability to have emotional contact. People will not really pay quite such close attention to what their children are going through or their wives or husbands or whatever. They exist in a kind of Stepford Wife world, so there’s two sides. There’s two sides to everything, though, Jarvis. Don’t you feel that honestly in your system?

**JC:** Yeah.

**DB:** Are we giving Damien what he wants?

**JC:** Oh God, I don’t know, and I don’t know what he wants. In America, there are loads of no-smoking buildings and no-smoking bars and you often stand shivering outside on the streets in the middle of winter.

**DB:** Well yes – we think of ourselves as sometimes approaching a nanny state but I think it’s far more prevalent in the States. It’s been part of their history since prohibition onwards – the idea of telling people what they should be doing. Their assumption is that they know best. Within a rational, straightforward way they’re probably right but I think you must have the choice to screw yourself. On the other hand, I do appreciate it is quite nice sometimes to have a meal without people smoking around you.

**JC:** It seems to be a kind of contentious point about secondary smoking or passive smoking.

**DB:** Yeah, and I do understand, but there again have you ever tried to conduct a relationship on cocaine?

I mean, what you do to the person is absolutely foul. It really is beyond tolerance, it’s dreadful. So few drugs don’t have an effect on the other person. Coffee so far seems to be okay.

**JC:** You can still keep a relationship together then?

**DB:** I think you can get a bit irritable if you’ve had too much but I think the sort of by-product of it isn’t ruined lives. I’ve not heard of many couples that were split apart by one’s addiction to coffee.



One of Bowie’s final photos, released to coincide with his album *Blackstar*

**JC:** It probably will happen if cigarettes get ground out of the way. So, my final question is: do you light your cigarettes with matches or a lighter?

**DB:** Wow. I used to light them with matches because it had a more theatrical effect, I think. But as my awareness that the cigarette doesn’t represent any particular attitude any more, it doesn’t have the potency of a symbol it used to have. I saw it once as a prop on stage, now I smoke on stage just because I need one. So now I’m quite happy with a Bic, which is pretty sort of fundamental. But I was aware of ritual and

routine and theatricality with a cigarette when I was younger. I knew exactly what I was doing around the stage, and the cigarette became symbolic of a certain kind of removed identity, you know – that I don’t have to be singing these songs, I’m just doing you a favour. I think the symbolic cigarette has dropped away behind now. It’s just another bloody thing that I do.

**JC:** Well, you know, don’t worry about it.

**DB:** No, I must say I don’t. I’m not losing sleep.

**JC:** Right, well, that’s it.

**DB:** Well it’s really nice to talk with you, Jarvis.

**JC:** You know it’s for this Big Issue thing, don’t you?

**DB:** Yeah.

**JC:** Thank you very much.

**DB:** Ta-ra. **TBI**

To read Malcolm Jack’s review of David Bowie’s new album *Blackstar* turn to page p37

## WHEN JARVIS MET BOWIE

HOW THE FORMER PULP FRONTMAN REMEMBERS IT...



I was quite nervous about the interview. I’d met him before very briefly but not to talk to. I presented an award to him and Brian Eno for his work on what they now call the *Berlin Trilogy*. I said “congratulations” and that’s as far as the conversation went. The idea of talking about smoking came from Damien Hirst. I think it was a good thing because where do you start with someone whose work you admire a lot?

If you gush and say how much you admire them, they’re just going to get defensive. As we’ve seen, there’s been an outpouring of public emotion about his death. A lot of people in society today will milk an emotional situation for what it’s worth. But he did the opposite. He kept it secret and he tried to channel what he was going through into his creative work. That’s something we should learn from.

I was always a bit of a lightweight when it came to smoking. If I got to 10 a day I’d make myself really ill, so I knocked it on the head about six years ago.



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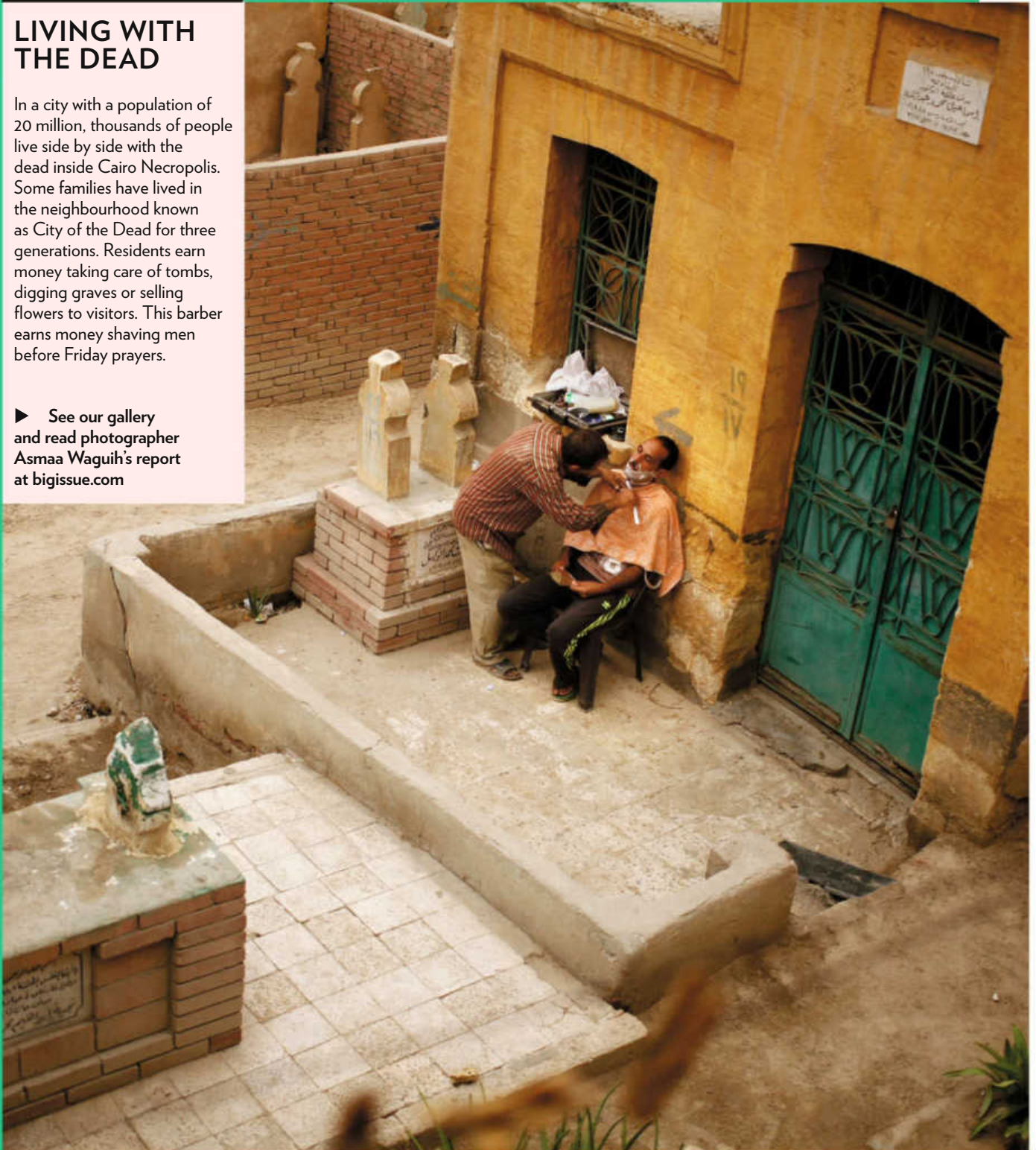


Photo: Reuters/Asmaa Waguih courtesy of INSP News service; insp.ngo

# BOOKS



Maria from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, 1927, which predicted a dystopian future

## AUTHOR FEATURE

# Rise of the robots

Artificial intelligence could bring us utopia or wipe us out, says Calum Chace. It depends how we harness it

I believe that historians in 2100 will look back on our century as the age of the two singularities. The word “singularity” is used in maths and physics to mean a point where change has become so rapid that the normal rules no longer apply. The two singularities coming our way this century are the economic singularity and the technological singularity. Both present enormous opportunities and challenges. If we manage them successfully our future as a species is beyond wonderful. If we fail, it could be miserable – and probably short.

The reason for this is artificial intelligence (AI) – humanity’s most powerful technology. Software that solves problems and turns data into insight has already made big impacts: your smartphone employs AI to deliver maps and apps; Google to answer your questions. But wonderful as these things are, the AI revolution has barely begun, and it is accelerating fast. In the next few decades you’ll see self-driving cars on the streets and have conversations with Siri, which will transform it into an invaluable friend. With trillions of tiny sensors and computer chips embedded in vehicles, clothing, buildings, street lamps and roads, your environment will become intelligible: the Internet of Things really is on its way.

In 2015, AI was rarely out of the headlines, and with good reason. The technology is approaching a tipping point at which machines perform at superhuman level many tasks that were previously deemed uniquely human. They are on the cusp of recognising faces and other images better than we do, and understanding and processing natural speech as well as we do.

The range of possible consequences is wide, from terrible to wonderful, and they are not pre-determined. They will be selected partly by happenstance, partly by their own internal logic but partly also by the policies embraced at all levels of society. The argument of my book *Surviving AI* is that we should monitor the changes that are happening, and adopt policies which will encourage best possible outcomes.

AI researcher Demis Hassabis likes to say that humanity’s plan for the future should involve two steps. Step one is to solve intelligence (i.e., create powerful AIs). Step two is to use that intelligence to solve everything else. How to cure disease, and even stop and reverse the ageing process. How to harness more solar energy and generate clean energy. These huge problems and many more can be solved if we tackle them together with machines that can assimilate and process information

better than we can. But like any powerful technology, AI has its risks. The two biggest are technological unemployment and superintelligence, and it is these which will generate the two singularities that kicked off this article. Technological unemployment is what will happen if, two or three decades hence, the automation of jobs by machines renders large numbers of people unable to find paid work because there is no work they can do that cannot be done cheaper, faster and more reliably by machines. If we are smart we could create an economy of “radical abundance”, where AIs and robots do all the work and humans enjoy lives of leisure and play, spending our days in conversation with friends, learning, playing sport, creating art and travelling.

But to make this world a reality we will probably need to evolve an entirely new economy, which is why I call it an economic singularity. If we get it wrong, an elite may own the means of production and suppress the rest of us in a dystopian technological authoritarian regime. Or the process of getting from where we are now to the new economy we want could prove too challenging, with devastating consequences for our economies, our societies and perhaps our entire civilisation.

The arrival of superintelligence, which could happen from two (unlikely) to seven (very likely) or more decades hence, will represent a technological singularity, and the most significant event in human history bar none. Being the second-smartest species on the planet is an uncomfortable position, as chimpanzees could tell you if they understood how precarious their position is. Working out how to survive this transition is the most important challenge facing humanity in this and the next generation.

If the superintelligence values us, it could improve our lives in ways quite literally beyond our imagination. A superintelligence that recursively improved its own architecture and expanded its capabilities could very plausibly solve almost any human problem you can think of. Death could become optional and we could enjoy lives of constant bliss and excitement. If it is indifferent to us, or even hostile, the result for us could be extinction.

Surviving AI, and two singularities, is the great challenge of this century.

Calum Chace’s *Surviving AI: The Promise and Peril of Artificial Intelligence* is out now (Three Cs, £9.99)





## 5 BOOKS EVERY KID SHOULD READ BY 12 DAN SMITH

### 1. JUST SO STORIES

Rudyard Kipling

I loved these stories when I was growing up, especially *The Elephant's Child*. Perfect for a quick, quiet read – they're guaranteed to raise a smile. And if there are any young writers out there, they can hone their skills by imitating the style of story.

### 2. FAMOUS FIVE

Enid Blyton

Always popular, always a favourite. And ALWAYS full of adventure.

### 3. TINTIN Hergé

The quick-witted reporter was a constant companion for me while I was growing up. I spent many hours on aeroplanes, and the time was always more bearable when I had a couple of Tintin adventures in my bag. Yetis, smugglers, pirates, sunken treasure, bandits, Incas, moon landings, sharks... Tintin books have everything.

### 4. DANNY THE CHAMPION OF THE WORLD

Roald Dahl  
I know that everyone picks *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* as their favourite Dahl book but *Danny...* trumps it for me. Danny is such a brave boy, and the relationship he has with his dad just couldn't be better. And all that sneaking about in the woods is so fun!

### 5. HARRY POTTER (BOOKS 1-3)

JK Rowling  
I don't believe there's a soul on the planet who doesn't know about Harry Potter. There are characters to love and there are characters to hate. There's magic, murder, mystery and adventure. Flying cars, living trees, chocolate frogs and, of course, my favourite character – Severus Snape!

Dan Smith's new book *Boy X* is out February 4 (Chicken House, £6.99)



# REVIEWS

WHEN THE SUN BURSTS / THE HAPPY MARRIAGE

## Mind how you go

If you are drawn to science books which seek to shed light on the human condition but often find yourself stymied by a lack of familiarity with medical jargon and academic argument, **When the Sun Bursts** may provide a rare treat. Like many fiction junkies, I spent years regarding science as the imperceptible 'other', which I had little time to attempt to penetrate. As I've gotten older and marginally wiser – and seen the two practices grow closer – I've become fascinated by those branches of science which, to employ some modern Sherlockian lingo, offer glimpses into the private mind palaces of others.

My holy grail is a study of neuroscience, which is not only readable and comprehensive but thought-provoking, epiphany-inducing and exciting. One which, in other words, offers the pleasures of a great novel, while enhancing my clinical understanding of human beings. George Eliot, Proust, Dostoevsky et al did it the other way round; science writing must have its mirrors.

Be still; I can't claim Christopher Bollas' book – a study of schizophrenia that focuses less on the history of treatment and more on getting to know the sufferer – is the holy grail. Speaking as a novice with my own, very subjective, favourites, *When the Sun Bursts* doesn't quite deliver the elation of a personal breakthrough I've found in the likes of Oliver Sacks, Daniel Levitin and Steve Silberman. It is, however, immediately intriguing, perpetually enlightening, often very moving and, as is so often the case in the best examples of psycho-science writing, compassionate and hopeful.

The first section, in which Bollas describes the behaviour of psychotic children he worked with as a psycho-theorist in 1960s California, is enthralling. We get characterful portraits of



Illustration: Dom McKenzie

compelling individuals – Larry, who bestows superpowers in the playground by licking his finger and sliding it down his playmates' foreheads; Nick, whose faith in his own inner workings is based on a pendulum in his bedroom. We get some insight as to why violence and a sense of threat often emanate from those whose brain can't withhold the onrush of un compartmentalised responses to the unpredictability of their environment. It begins to make sense – the creation of fictional selves to deal with the betrayal of what once, in many cases, seemed a 'normal' mind.

All through the book we come across examples of the depth of curiosity and imagination many psychotic patients convey, their desire for emot-

ional connections and the great fear with which they often face the day. While Bollas writes with unsentimental authority, there is tenderness in his telling. Scornful of zombie-producing medication, he believes strongly in therapist-patient interaction and also offers chinks of light; those times when he made breakthroughs, usually through talking, playing and repetitive reassurance. In the end, you're just glad he, and others who think like him, are around.

It would be intriguing to have a behavioural expert dissect the titular **Happy Marriage** of Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun's ambitious novel, in which a painter who has suffered a debilitating stroke rakes the embers of his 'damned' marriage to a bitter, rage-fuelled, irrational woman. I was gripped by this lively, lyrical, wise book and its insight into the complexities of two radically different personalities sharing their lives over decades (the wife is latterly awarded a first-person right to reply). It is also refreshingly unpatronising as it presents its two narrators' skewed versions of their unhappy union.



#### When the Sun Bursts

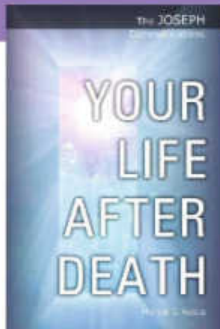
Christopher Bollas, hardback  
Yale University Press, £18.99



#### The Happy Marriage

Tahar Ben Jelloun, hardback  
Melville House Publishing, £18.99

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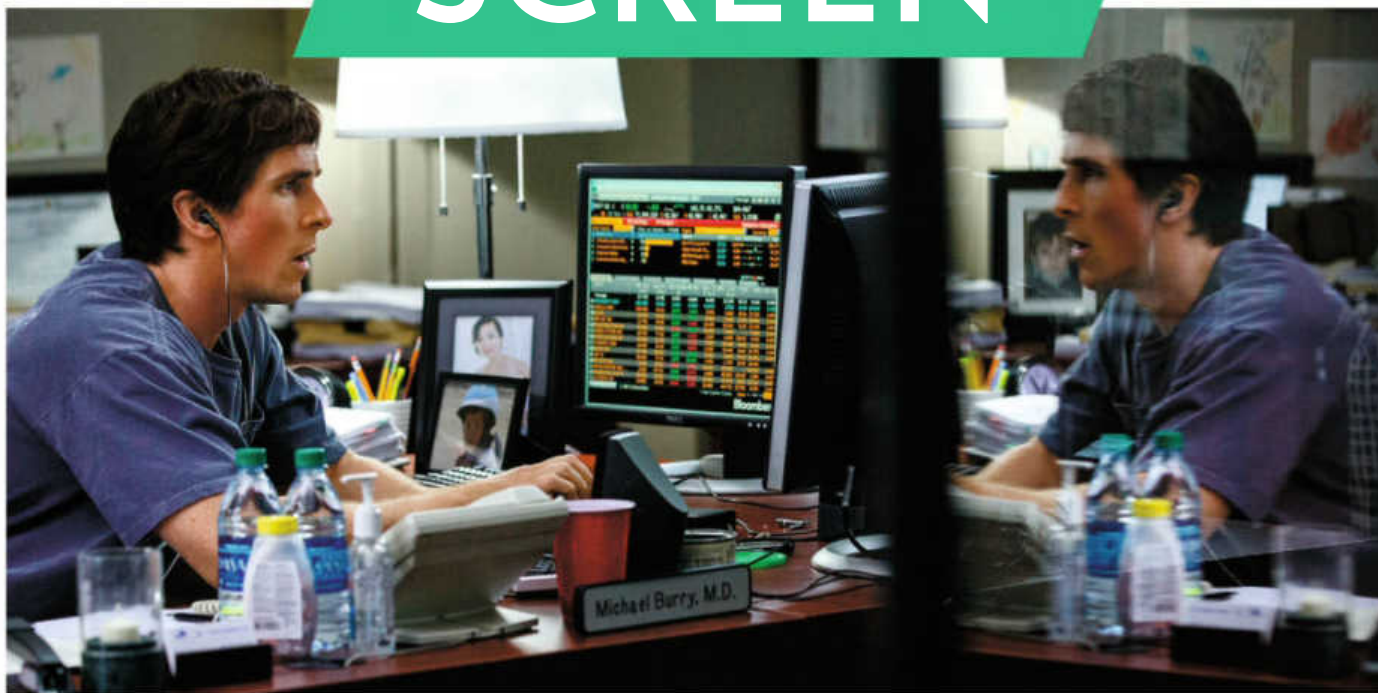
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# SCREEN



FILM / EDWARD LAWRENSON

## Caught short

**Anchor Man** director Adam McKay is an unlikely chronicler of the 2008 financial crash. Turns out he's a safe bet...

**T**he *Big Short* is a deftly orchestrated true-life drama about the events leading up to the financial crisis of 2008. Along the way it unpicks some of the fiendishly complicated mechanisms that led to the collapse – ‘collateralised debt obligations’ being just one of the many daunting things explained here with freshwater clarity. In fact, *The Big Short* does such a good job of shining a light into the dark crevices of financial mismanagement it almost performs a public service – but in the form of whip-smart, wildly irreverent entertainment.

The director is Adam McKay, known for funny Will Ferrell films. Is the guy behind *Talladega Nights* the right person to chronicle the intricacies of the subprime loan market in the US? Turns out, he is. The greed and incompetence depicted here is so brazen the only proper response is a kind of bitter, outraged amusement. McKay knows how to tell a good joke, and the biggest joke of all is the bankers got away with it for so long.

The focus is on a handful of (real-life) financial workers who saw the whole thing coming. Hedge-fund manager Michael Burry (Christian Bale) is an introverted oddball with a bad haircut and a penchant for air drumming. Preferring the company

of spreadsheets to other human beings, Michael deduces, by looking at the bad home loans on the banks' books, that a meltdown is imminent. So against this corrupt housing market he takes out what is effectively a huge bet (or ‘big short’) – with a key scene taking place in Vegas, the film treats all financial trading as a less regulated, more morally questionable form of gambling.

A slick Wall Street trader played by Ryan Gosling (exuding triple A-rated machismo) gets wind of Michael's detective work, and lets slip to Mark Baum (Steve Carell), a hedge-fund manager with anger issues. Indirectly, the news reaches former banker Ben, a hippyish drop-out with a line in anti-government paranoia played with a greying beard and suburban sobriety by Brad Pitt.

Separately planning against-the-odds bets against the housing market, these three characters are all genial misfits, caught up in the grand farcical workings of Wall Street. But for all their abrasive charm – Carell is especially good value as a bullshit-averse New Yorker – the point surely is that their supposedly more conventional colleagues are the truly

dysfunctional ones. After all, they remain convinced that US mortgages are the safest investment in town.

Mark, Michael and Ben aren't exactly heroes – they seek to profit from the crash as much as the idiots who caused it. But in their dogged insistence a crisis is looming, this trio possess a kind of crusading truth. The film builds to the eventual crash with the momentum of a disaster film. So how come no one listens to these guys?

It's a question you find yourself asking repeatedly. But if *The Big Short* reserves most of its blame for the complacency and corruption of Wall Street executives, it doesn't entirely let us off the hook.

Throughout, McKay blitzes the audience with a montage of images, from burger adverts through iPhone launches to YouTube clips of dogs. These add colour and skittish pace to the potentially dry business of financial malpractice but I wonder if McKay isn't also admonishing our preference

for superficial distraction over sustained scrutiny of big institutions like the banks? *The Big Short* has impressive stylistic swagger and political bite. If its lesson is we all need to be more vigilant to avoid a repeat of 2008, then the worrying title card at the end suggests it's a lesson we're fast unlearning.



Qi Shu plays the assassin

### FINAL REEL

Set in Tang dynasty China, *The Assassin* is a lavish martial arts picture from Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-Hsien, one of the best film-makers around. The plot is hard to follow but the film is drop-dead gorgeous, probably cinema's most sumptuous experience this year.



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## ROBOT WARS RETURNS. THE PRISONER SET FOR RELEASE. PLUS STAR WARS NEWS



The BBC Two series *Robot Wars* is coming back to our screens. A six-episode run of the show has been ordered, which is set to screen before the end of the year.

Problems have hit the *World War Z* sequel. Due to film this summer, it's lost its director as Juan Antonio Bayona has quit the film. Brad Pitt is still set to star in the film.

A sequel to *Rocky* spin-off *Creed* is happening. *Creed 2* will see Michael B Jordan reprise the lead role, although this one too needs another director if it wants to hit a 2017 release. *Creed* director Ryan Coogler is skipping the sequel to make *Black Panther* for Marvel.



JJ Abrams has confirmed we won't be getting an extended cut when *Star Wars: the Force Awakens* debuts on DVD and Blu-ray. There may be deleted scenes but they won't be edited back in.

*The Prisoner* is getting another run out, this time on the big screen. Ridley Scott – busy with *Alien: Covenant* – is reportedly interested in directing a feature based on the cult TV hit.

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## FOCUS

# David McCallum

Man from U.N.C.L.E. icon is rather right wing for a Soviet spy...

**In *The Great Escape* you were a member of one of the best casts ever seen on film.** Just looking around and seeing Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson and the whole gang... You felt part of a very distinguished cast. But at the same time you had no idea how successful the movie would be. It wasn't until they screened it at the Odeon, Leicester Square. We were sitting upstairs in the balcony, the curtains parted and that

wonderful music by Bernstein came on. You realised, hey this is going to be good. I can remember that first screening as if it was yesterday.

**You have written your first novel, *Once a Crooked Man*.**

**What is it about?** My father used to say when he read a book he liked a good yarn. There's nothing particularly profound about *Once a Crooked Man*

but I hope it is, as my father said, a good yarn.

**The title refers to the nursery rhyme but what was the nursery rhyme referring to?**

It's all about the feud between England and Scotland and the borderlands. That's the crooked fence.

**We're still living in the crooked UK. You emigrated from the UK because you felt it was becoming a socialist country. Has it turned out the way you thought?** Would you say Britain is socialist? How many

Conservative MPs are there in Scotland?

**One.** Exactly. I rest my case.

**But there is only one Labour MP as well.** Yes. But the SNP are pretty far to the left as I remember.

**They appear to be – they have their headline policy about nationalism but most people don't look beyond that to see what they really represent.** I think my favourite quote over the years was Margaret Thatcher when she said that welfare is a wonderful idea until you run out of other people's money. That really sums up the way I feel. We spend our lives concerned about people who are not well off and you can't just wave a magic wand. These problems go deep into history. The complexity of

**"I welcome the fresh air Donald Trump is blowing through the Republican Party"**

international and current affairs has reached mind-blowing proportions.

**How do we deal with the complexity?** One thing I believe is that the human being – the actual spirit of a human being – is to be independent, have a good job, have a family that he or she supports. The unit of the family is the basic building block of a very firm, strong society that demands very little from government. When 50 or 60 per cent of the population rely on the government for food and



McCallum claims Britain is a socialist country

shelter, the whole structure is so lopsided that it collapses under its own weight.

**You sound like you could be a politician.** In order to solve these problems, you have to have incredibly bright and intelligent people running the country for us, and you don't always find that's the case.

**TV politicians are taking over, as Donald Trump is proving.** It's quite unique in this country. He's telling it how it is.

**Do you welcome that kind of politics?** I welcome the fresh air Trump is blowing through the Republican Party. He's not a politician, and so how someone from outside politics comes crashing in and then has to become a true politician and a diplomat... I'll be fascinated to watch what happens.

**But in comparison, Obama seems like an intellectual, the type we just said should be in charge.** Obama is an ideologue. He has his way and he won't accept any other. The consequences of Obama's brand of socialism in a country like America, which wasn't really founded on these principles, have become enormous.

*Once a Crooked Man* is out now.  
Interview: Steven MacKenzie  
@stevenmackenzie

LUCY SWEET

## And... breathe. In times of stress, I blame TV

Recently, everything I watch has been gripping. Full on, white knuckle, dry mouth, what-the-hell-is-going-to-happen-next stuff, which leaves you in torment for hours afterwards.

In the last few days, to quote Ron Burgundy, I have been in a glass case of emotion. Like everybody else with a Netflix account, I've been watching the insane unfolding of *Making a Murderer*, having wild and weird dreams about auto salvage yards in Wisconsin. Then there's *Deutschland 83*, which involves sweaty sneaking around and stealing nuclear secrets to the soundtrack of 99 Luftballons by Nena. And, of course, *Jessica Jones* – queasy, disorientating flashbacks and shock horror grimness. It's all so nerve-wracking and relentless, I think I'll need a course of CBT.

When did TV get so anxiety-ridden? I mean, the news is stressful enough. Do we need entertainment to bring us out in hives as well? Can't we have repeats of *The Darling Buds of May* or a soothing potter's wheel interlude instead? A nice film about bread-making?

Stress TV depends on intensity to keep you hooked. It brings you up, drags you down, throws you in the back of a Toyota and drives you to a wasteland in Sweden to find something gruesome in a shed. There's no let up. Once you're on the Stress Express, you have to stop at Scare Central, Palpitation Plot Point

and Anxiety Interchange. There are bodies, dark corners and unanswered, nail-biting questions everywhere.

Then when you get there – to the end of the story – you're still left with a sense of unease. Because you've just watched dozens of episodes of something that's taken over your life, only to find that it's finished and you are bereft. Even though it gave you a squeaky bum and sleepless nights, you were actually enjoying it. What kind of monster are you? Wouldn't your time be better spent volunteering or gardening? But you don't have to wonder too long because there's another drama with subtitles round the corner featuring murdered children and a convoluted story arc involving Danish shipping crates and a police conspiracy, and off you go again – into the void.

Personally, I'm going to have to limit my exposure to gripping TV because I can't handle the pace. It's such powerful stuff that it should be used sparingly – like Nitromors or Lotus biscuit spread. To keep myself from tipping over the edge, I will have to intersperse my viewing with episodes of *Coach Trip* or *Benidorm*. Dilute the murder with *Danger Mouse*. Ease the mental exhaustion with a DVD of a log fire or a goldfish tank. In fact, at this rate, I think I might have to actually use that crap mindfulness colouring book I got for Christmas.

@lucytweet1



### DON'T BE A TIM'ROUS BEASTIE

As it is **Burns Night** this week, in order to bring a Caledonian feel south of the border, you can stay in to make your own haggis, tatties and neeps as a tribute to the Scottish poet. Or you can head out into the braw, bricht, moonlight nicht.

There will be plenty of bars selling whisky and restaurants offering Burns suppers but the **Glasgow International Comedy Festival Burns Night Gala** (January 25, Leicester Square, London; leicestersquaretheatre.com) presents a different take on the night. It's a warm up for the Glasgow International Comedy Festival in March and will feature a mix of new stand-ups and some genuinely big surprise names, with the exact line up to be

announced nearer the time.

**Hyson Green Workshops: Citizen Design Action** (January 23–March 20, Nottingham;



nae.org.uk) is a tribute to a citizen-led art project in the 1970s at the now-demolished Hyson Green Flats (above) in Nottingham. Residents, faced with bad social planning, took over disused garages and turned them into "spaces for cultural expression, community activity and economic growth".

**The London Art Fair** (January 20–24, Islington, London; londonartfair.co.uk) is the country's biggest contemporary art fair and is now in its 28th year. Like a Russian doll, there are three





## Taking his final bow



events in one – the main fair as well as sub-events **Art Projects** (new contemporary art featuring large-scale installations, solo shows and group displays) and **Photo50** (a curated selection of 50 contemporary photos).

### Facing History: Contemporary Portraiture

(until April 24, South Kensington, London; [vam.ac.uk](http://vam.ac.uk)) has been open a few months but if you've not got around to seeing it, now is your chance. It includes pieces by artists such as Julian Opie, Grayson Perry, Ellen Heck and Gavin Turk, and reveals how they have drawn on classic portraiture techniques and styles. These include silhouettes, death masks, ID cards and campaign posters, to comment on the use of facial images in very different contexts.

A fascinating exhibition comes to a close this week, so

this is your last chance to see **Epstein's Rock Drill Transformed by War** (until January 24, Walsall; [thenewartgallery.walsall.org.uk](http://thenewartgallery.walsall.org.uk)). *Rock Drill* is Jacob Epstein's most famous piece, featuring what is described as a "mechanised abstracted human figure" straddling a real rock drill used in mines. By summer 1916 he had dismantled



it to create the truncated *Torso in Metal* from 'Rock Drill' (above). Almost 60 years later, his widow Kathleen Garman approved a reconstruction of the original piece.

Eamonn Forde

**C**lues to **David Bowie's** demise were hidden in plain view on his 25th and final album *Blackstar*. So why didn't I spot them until two days after its release on his 69th birthday, when David Robert Jones (to give Bowie his earthling name) succumbed to cancer? I suppose because I hadn't even really considered it possible that Bowie, a man by all impressions not of this universe, *could* die.

But he did, and with it his final months and that album, all suddenly appreciable in full context, became a farewell of the most breathtaking integrity and dignity. "His death was no different from his life – a work of art," wrote close friend and producer Tony Visconti. Much as everyone wishes Bowie could have had more time, Visconti's right. It was excruciatingly perfect.

The Starman came out of a 10-year career hypersleep in 2013 with the blindsidingly superb album *The Next Day*. His health problems were well-known – after heart surgery in 2004 he effectively retired from touring. But his cancer, diagnosed in 2014, was kept secret until the end. Bowie wore a cloak of enigma throughout the *Blackstar* campaign, eschewing public appearances, instead endeavouring to make his parting statement through song. What guts and guile that must have taken, to end his life in private, hard at work and still writing, and let the world remember him not as frail and fading but at his untouchably cool best.

Cornerstones of rock iconography, Bowie's personas – among them glam androgyny '72, plastic soul boy '75, stick thin and strung out on cocaine '76, bleach-blond, suntanned and in a big pastel suit '83 – all feel somehow immortal. In reality each lived a few short months as Bowie released 14 albums in 14 years between 1969 and 1983, reinventing himself almost every time. All of his best work, from rock 'n' roll game-changer *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* through the moodily futuristic Berlin trilogy (including my personal favourite 1977's *Low*) to his commercial zenith *Let's Dance*, came practically as an unbroken, breathlessly prolific stream of creativity. Fans could barely dye



Ashes to ashes: the Starman turned his life and death into art

their hair quickly enough to keep pace. *Blackstar* blasts Bowie's manifold legend back into the cosmos where it belongs. The video for the 10-minute title song begins with a diamond-encrusted skull in a space suit – imagery that needs no explanation. The closing track is called *I Can't Give Everything Away*. A complex and adventurous set, to my ear it draws inspiration from Scott Walker, specifically his avant-garde solo albums. Search YouTube for a 1997 BBC interview in which Bowie chokes back tears after being surprised by a heartfelt 50th birthday greeting from his "idol since I was a kid" as he puts it, and you'll appreciate not just what Walker meant to Bowie but how Bowie was a true music fan with attendant emotional triggers just like me or you.

Even if he didn't seem earthy, his sense of humour was. *Viz* was among his favourite reads, and in 2006 he made a memorable cameo in Ricky Gervais' sitcom *Extras*, performing the song *Chubby Little Loser*. It became a kind of gallows humour towards the end. With Lazarus he practically delivers his own obituary ("This way or no way, you know I'll be free") with a video depicting him singing from a hospital bed. He looks anxious, as any man would facing death. Yet he finds playfulness and poetry in life even as it's about to be taken from him.

David Bowie could have fallen to Earth at any time in human history. Let's be thankful that he landed on our watch.

@MBJack



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PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

# THINKING ABOUT FURTHER STUDY?

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO APPROACH POSTGRADUATE COURSES, SAYS CLARE MCSHEAFFREY FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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The two main options are:

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- Funding options for postgraduate study are varied and



often depend on where and what you want to study. Funding options include a government loans scheme of up to £10,000, available from 2016-2017, as well as

scholarships and bursaries from foundations, professional bodies and societies or your university, and hardship loans.

You could also apply for a fully or partially funded studentship (most commonly a PhD), subject-based awards for a particular study area – usually teaching, social work, medicine and healthcare. Alternatively, you could apply for a professional and career development loan, often offered at a reduced interest rate.

Find out more information and get advice on all your funding options and the best way to apply for course funding from The Careers Group, University of London. The Careers Group also organise the Postgraduate Study Fair, held on January 28 in central London. Head to [postgradfair.co.uk](http://postgradfair.co.uk) to find out more and to book your place at the fair.

The Postgraduate Fair is one of the leading postgraduate study fairs in the UK, with up to 90 top UK and international universities taking part. You can receive free CV, interview and postgraduate application help, as well as attend a series of presentations on all areas of postgraduate life.

Clare McSheaffrey is Head of Events at The Careers Group, University of London



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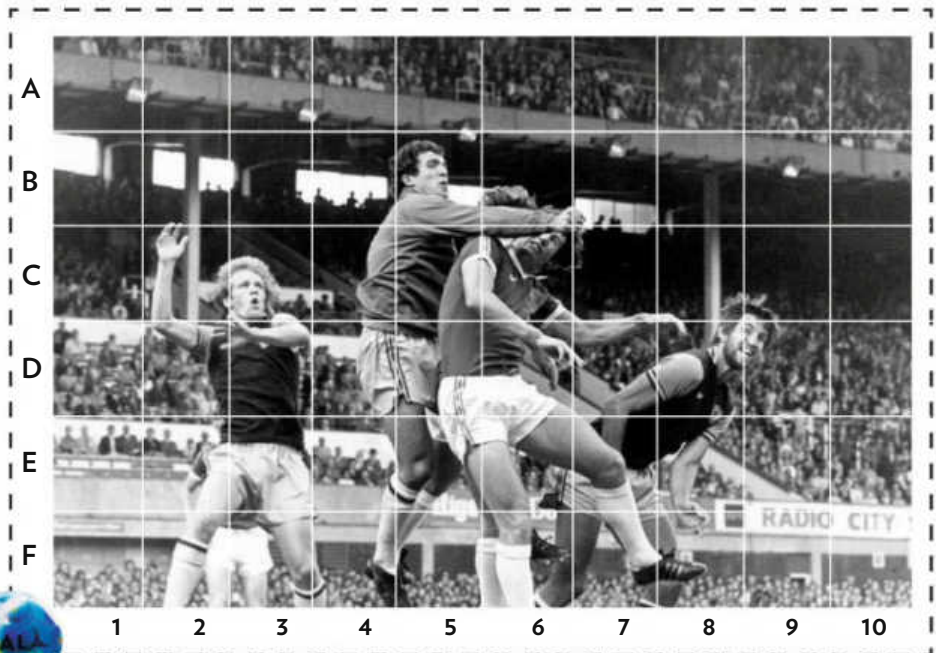


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# GAMES & PUZZLES

## SPOT THE BALL



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To win a Bala Fairtrade-certified football, mark where you think the ball is, cut out and send to: Spot the Ball (1188), Second Floor, 43 Bath St, Glasgow, G2 1HW by January 26. Include name, address and phone number. To enter by email, send your grid position (eg A1) to competitions@bigissue.com. Issue 1186 winner is Wendy Hardiman from Penkridge. [balasport.co.uk](http://balasport.co.uk)



(Last week's Spot the Ball revealed:  
Tottenham v West Ham, 1984)

## Brain Teaser

This week's teaser is a battle of the generations. Put the set of general knowledge questions below to one person aged 20-30, and one aged 60+.



(1) What is the name of Dorothy's dog in *The Wizard of Oz*? (2) What was the previous surname of the boxer Muhammad Ali? (3) What is the process by which plants generate energy? (4) A 50th wedding anniversary is traditionally associated with which metal? (5) Which country has the yen as its currency? (6) Who wrote *Brave New World*? (7) What was the poison that was used to kill Socrates? (8) Who invented the polio vaccine? (9) King Louis XIV built which palace? (10) What was the name of King Arthur's sword? (Answers upside down at the bottom of the page).

In most tests of learning and memory, performance declines with age. However, a recent study found that on these types of general knowledge questions the oldies outperformed the youngsters (41 per cent vs 26 per cent correct). Why? In addition to having stored more information, memories in older people tend to become 'crystallised' and resist being overwritten. So next time you're headed to the pub quiz, why not invite your mum or dad along?

Got more questions? Here are the answers: [tinyurl.com/j54ga3c](http://tinyurl.com/j54ga3c)

Answers: (1) Toto (2) Clay (3) Photosynthesis (4) Gold (5) Japan (6) Aldous Huxley (7) Hemlock (8) Jonas Salk (9) Versailles (10) Excalibur.

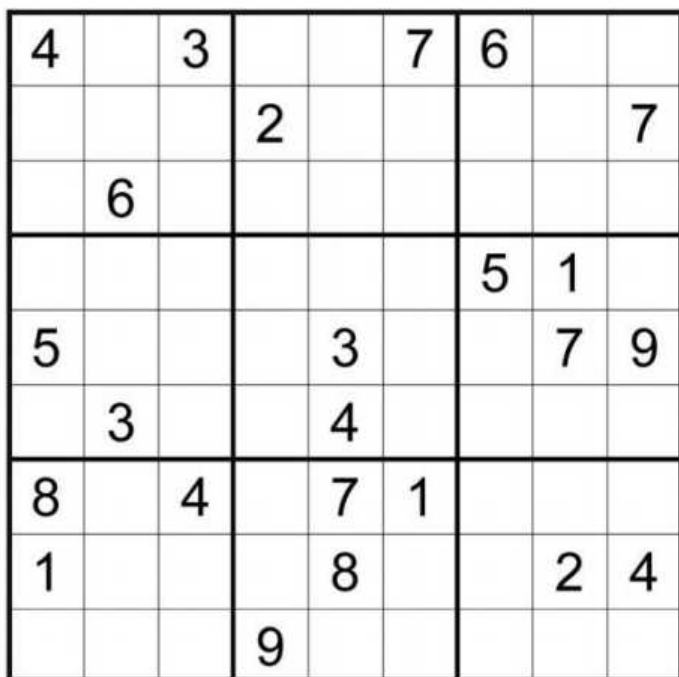
Discover new truths in our weekly test, based on Dr Ben Ambridge's book, *PSY-Q*, a series of interactive tests of your personality, intelligence, moral values, thinking style, impulsivity, skill at drawing, capacity for logical reasoning, musical taste, multi-tasking ability, susceptibility to illusions (both visual and mental) and preferences in a romantic partner. Courtesy of Profile Books







## SUDOKU

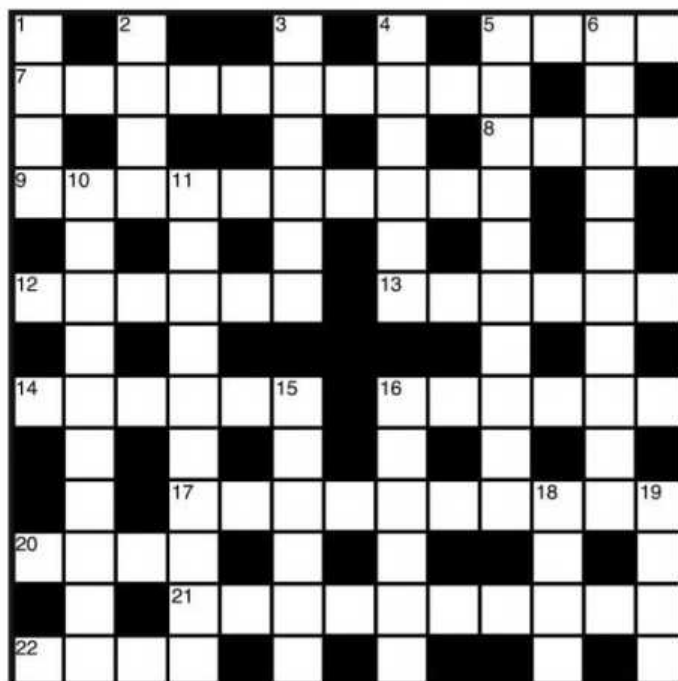


ISSUE 1187 SOLUTION

8	1	2	3	7	5	4	9	6
7	5	4	6	8	1	2	3	9
6	3	9	4	2	1	8	5	7
3	7	6	2	5	4	9	8	1
4	2	1	6	8	9	3	7	5
9	8	5	7	1	3	2	6	4
2	4	3	5	9	7	6	1	8
5	9	8	1	4	5	7	3	2
1	6	7	8	3	2	5	4	9

There is just one simple rule in sudoku: each row, column and 3 x 3 box must contain the numbers one to nine. This is a logic puzzle and you should not need to guess. The solution will be revealed next week.

## PRIZE CROSSWORD



To win a Chambers Dictionary, send completed crosswords (either cryptic or quick) to: The Big Issue Crossword (1188), second floor, 43 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 1HW by January 26. Include your name, address and phone number. **Issue 1186 winner is Bill Harvey from Bristol.**

WIN!

## STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON ON DVD PLUS GOODIE BAGS



In *Straight Outta Compton: Director's Cut* fans can follow NWA's electrifying lyrics and unique sound, which exposed life in the 'hood – igniting a social revolution that still reverberates today. Directed by F Gary Gray, *Straight Outta Compton* tells the true story of five young rebels from South Central Los Angeles who, armed with only their lyrics, swagger, bravado and talent, stood up to the authorities. The film features O'Shea Jackson Jr (Ice Cube), Corey Hawkins (Dr Dre), Jason Mitchell (Eazy-E), Neil Brown Jr (DJ Yella) and Aldis Hodge (MC Ren) as NWA.

*Straight Outta Compton: Director's Cut* is out on Blu-ray, DVD and On Demand (Universal Pictures Home Entertainment). We're giving away three merch bundles, including a copy of the film on Blu-ray, the official soundtrack on CD, and an official jacket, T-shirt and gig-bag.

To enter, tell us:

which rap group's story is told in *Straight Outta Compton*?



Send answers with **STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON** as the subject to [competitions@bigissue.com](mailto:competitions@bigissue.com) or post to The Big Issue, 43 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 1HW. Include your name and address. Closing date is January 26. Include OPT OUT if you don't want to receive updates from The Big Issue. We will not pass your details to any third party. For full T&Cs see [bigissue.com](http://bigissue.com)

## CRYPTIC CLUES

## Across

- Go to another African country (4)
- Her bar once fomented hatred (10)
- Man who is backing legal right (4)
- Having made things worse, was irritated (10)
- Some jostle Richard the stableman (6)
- Left nearly everything in the doorway (6)
- Crater damaged by projectile (6)
- Thrill one gets from a slight 21 Across? (6)
- Neat floors surprisingly cannot be bought (3,3,4)
- Teeth – hundreds go back in (4)
- World-shattering experience (10)
- Heavy role for an actor? (4)

## Down

- Animal spoke of a Buddhist priest (4)
- Sounds as if it might have covered the head of old politician (4)
- One drives right into Kent port (6)
- I spent recklessly and got only part of a shoe (6)
- Offer cape with sensitivity (10)
- More than a pound in old money for a bird? (6,4)
- Germany's leading stargazer cut short the gourmet (10)
- Memento needs rebuilding to be authorised again (10)
- Still giving an answer (6)
- Wasting away, not having a prize (6)
- From a particular place on an opponent's ground (4)
- Always cut head off (4)

## QUICK CLUES

## Across

- Russian mountain range (4)
- Check-up (10)
- Frustrate (4)
- Castle defence (10)
- Wickedly (6)
- Save from danger (6)
- Fan (6)
- Relative (6)
- Meeting the expectations of (10)
- Long for (4)
- Ensnaring (10)
- Heavy blow (slang) (4)

## Down

- Violent (4)
- Continent (4)
- Vitamin deficiency condition (6)
- Dry, flammable matter (6)
- Stand-by actor (10)
- Forgiveness (10)
- Disclosure (10)
- Supporter (4-6)
- Revolve (6)
- Protective cover (6)
- Egyptian goddess (4)
- In senile dotage (slang) (4)

Issue 1187 solution

**CRYPTIC:** Across – 3 Patchwork; 7 Loire; 8 Nursemaid; 9 Op art; 10 Cannons; 13 Rains; 14 Evade; 16 Nosed; 17 Mascara; 21 Adore; 22 Straining; 23 Extra; 24 Openended Down – 1 Elbow-room; 2 Hilarious; 3 Pentose; 4 Casca; 5 Woman; 6 Reign; 10 Clara; 11 Offshoots; 12 Saddlebag; 15 Engaged; 18 Act up; 19 Chain; 20 Run in. **QUICK:** Across – 3 Boulevard; 7 Hover; 8 Explosion; 9 Merge; 10 Scarlet; 13 Loose; 14 Rigid; 16 Inert; 17 No doubt; 21 Later; 22 Unethical; 23 Elfin; 24 Specified. Down – 1 Chameleon; 2 Overjoyed; 3 Breeder; 4 Lilac; 5 Visor; 6 Rhode; 10 Sight; 11 Lowestoft; 12 Tittering; 15 Dialed; 18 Own up; 19 Optic; 20 Brief.

# MY PITCH



## Josie Doyle, 35

### “I have a competition with my boyfriend to see who can sell more magazines”

#### FACTS ABOUT ME...

##### MY FAVOURITE ARTIST

My nan. She taught art for a while and she taught me how to draw and paint. My passion for art comes from her.

##### MY FAVOURITE TOWN

Bournemouth. It has idyllic beaches and lovely buildings. I've moved around a lot but I can't see myself leaving this place now.

I started selling The Big Issue three years ago and it helped me get clean of substance abuse. Things were okay for a couple of years but then I found myself in a tricky situation, and homeless, about six months ago, so I picked up the work again.

Things have been better since then. I didn't realise how depressed I was before I came back to selling the magazine. It lifted me – it gave me a reason to get up and do something positive with the day.

I've been working hard at it. It really helps having such nice customers happy to have a chat. I was the highest-selling vendor in Bournemouth one week leading up to Christmas.

My boyfriend Matt also sells the magazine, so we have competitions to see who can sell more. It means we've

managed to rent a small studio flat together. The Big Issue is keeping a roof over our heads at the moment, and it even allowed us to earn enough to go all out and make a really nice Christmas dinner together.

Over the years I've slept on the streets, stayed on friends' sofas. I've moved up and down the country like a yo-yo. It probably stems from an unsettled childhood. I was part of a large family and we moved from school to school and council estate to council estate.

I went to a hippy school in Devon for a while, a bit like a Steiner school. It was very unstructured, the kind of place you learned a bit of witchcraft and telepathy alongside your French. I did enjoy being there. I was a truant a lot of my school years but I loved art – that was my passion. I think I used it as

an escape from reality.

I'm quite creative. Even if it's just making bracelets, I'll always find something to occupy my creative side. I've had some paintings exhibited in galleries. One of my oil paintings was based on Andrea Mantegna's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*.

I've also kept writing poems over the years. I'm not trying to write the perfect poem, it's just very therapeutic to try to capture your thoughts as best you can. Whenever family tragedy has struck, it's really helped me get through it.

Things are going well for Matt and me here. We've been through a lot together. But now we have somewhere that feels like home.

Interview: Adam Forrest

Photo: Paul Underhill



# DID YOU SEE SOPHIE?

Have a look at page 26. Did you see her? Or did you look past her and carry on with your life?



Like many of the young people who come to Centrepont, Sophie is no stranger to being ignored. Her mother used to lock her in a cupboard and her step-father used to hit her in the face to keep her quiet.

Sophie left home as soon as she could and fled to London, where she slept rough for three years. She was constantly cold, hungry, dirty, tired and worst of all scared.

She saw many friends get attacked, and her best friend was raped, murdered and set on fire. Sophie thought it was only a matter of time until something similar happened to her.

By giving just 40p a day (£12 a month) you can get a vulnerable homeless person off the streets right now.

You'll give them a room of their own and all the support they need to rebuild their life.

They'll receive counselling to deal with their problems, career advice to help them into college or a job, and basic life skills, such as how to budget and pay bills. So, when they're ready to leave, they can live independently.

Many people don't give homeless people like Sophie a second glance, but today you can be the person who chooses not to ignore them.

Thanks to someone like you, Sophie is now safe at Centrepont.

**Sponsor a room at Centrepont.**

**Call 0800 138 4499**

**Visit [centrepontroom.org.uk](http://centrepontroom.org.uk) or return the form below**

## Why become a Centrepont Room Sponsor?

- For just 40p a day, you could help a young person escape homelessness forever
- You'll receive a welcome pack and regular updates about the progress of young people you're supporting
- 89% of young people who come through Centrepont go on to find education, employment or their own home
- 85p of every pound we spend goes directly towards services for homeless young people

**Sponsor a room - just 40p a day**



Your regular gift will be used to assist young people in sponsored rooms and for the general purposes of Centrepont - working with homeless and socially excluded young people.

**Will you sponsor a Centrepont room and get a homeless young person off the streets for good?**

- ☐ I wish to sponsor a room at **£12 a month**  
☐ I wish to sponsor two rooms at **£24 a month**  
☐ I wish to sponsor  rooms at **£  a month**

**Please collect my payment on the 1st/15th of every month** (please circle preferred date)

**Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit**

To The Manager: \_\_\_\_\_ Originators Identification No. **659107**  
Name and full address of your Bank or Building Society: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of Account Holder(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Bank Sort Code:  -  -  Account Number:

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society: Please pay Centrepont Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction, subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Centrepont and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account

To protect the privacy of those we help, a model has been used for the photograph and the name has been changed. The story however is true and as told by a young person.

RAP1516B-14B

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

In accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act, Centrepont will use your personal data to process your donation. By providing your telephone number and email address you agree that Centrepont may contact you on occasion about your donations by telephone, SMS/or email. If you do not want to receive this information please write to Supporter Care, Central House, 25 Camperdown Street, London E1 8DZ. We will never sell or share your details with other organisations.

**Under the Government's Gift Aid scheme, all donations made by UK tax payers are worth a quarter more. To make your gift go further, just tick the box and date**

*giftaid it*

☐ I would like Centrepont to reclaim the tax I have paid on all donations I have made in the four years prior to this year, and any donations I may make in the future. I am a UK taxpayer. I am paying at least as much in income and/or capital gains tax in a year as will be reclaimed by all charities to which I give in that tax year.

Date / /

**Please return this form to: Centrepont Room Sponsorship  
Freeport ANG 2640, Colchester, CO2 8BR. Thank you**

Registered Charity No 29241 RAP1516B-14B







NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE  
THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

# ANY MEANS NECESSARY

BY KEFI CHADWICK



5-20 FEB 2016

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